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BYELORUSSIAN COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM: PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

by

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121 Western literature on the Soviet Union is strikingly bereft of material on both the "nationalist deviations" in the U. S. S. R. and the workings of the Communist Party on the local and regional levels. The present manuscript is intended as a contribution toward providing the student with material for filling this gap.

The author provides an account of Byelorussian political life between the two wars, covering many problems not heretofore elucidated in Western literature. The intensified Soviet campaign against "bourgeois nationalists" since the second World War assumes new significance in the light of evidence presented here on similar purges and campaigns antedating the recent drive by many years. In Byelorussia the anti-nationalist campaign affected both Communist nationalists and non-Communist separatists, decimating a considerable part of the national intelligentsia.

The manuscript is based exclusively on the author's personal recollections. It is not the product of research, if only because of the striking lack of printed sources on much of the material which the author covers. It is offered merely as raw material for the Western researcher. While an effort has been made to spot check verifiable dates and events, the manuscript must be considered unedited. In particular, the author's political views are entirely his own and do not necessarily represent those of the sponsoring organization. However, it has seemed proper to present the manuscript in its original form as a contribution toward a hitherto neglected subject.

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Belorussian Communism and Nationalism -- Personal Recollections

S. Krushinskii

Introduction: 1917-1920

668 The February Revolution of 1917 must be considered the turning point in the history of the Belorussian national movement. From the first days of the revolution there took place throughout all of Belorussia, especially in the future capital, Minsk, various congresses, conferences, and meetings in which, besides discussion of special questions, the problem of the future destiny of the area and its state structure occupied a position of by no means minor importance. All along the enormous front, in Petrograd, the Baltic Fleet, the Black Sea Fleet, in Odessa, and in other places, Belorussian officers and soldiers organized their own national committees and unions in, as it were, an answering echo to the activities in the homeland. Belorussians on the front were very interested in the political doings at home. Subsequently most of those who had organized committees at the front occupied prominent positions in national work at home.

Post-revolutionary events and the national questions raised by the masses required solutions and the acceptance of some kind of decisions. Searching for a solution, the political leaders of the time came to the conclusion that only a congress of delegates elected by the whole nation would be authorized properly to determine the form of the state structure of Belorussia, and likewise to resolve the most pressing post-revolutionary questions.

668 642 The First All-Belorussian Congress convened in Minsk from the eighteenth to the thirty-first of December, 1917. Of the delegates present 1,167 had a deciding voice and 705 a consultative voice. However the Congress did not finish its work and on December 30th was dispersed by armed units of Bolsheviks. The Congress passed on its powers for the conduct of further work to the Rada of the Belorussian National Republic, then and there elected at the Congress. The Rada chiefly utilized the underground to carry on its work under the difficult conditions of war and the Bolshevik terror. In its session of March 25, 1918, the Rada passed a resolution of historic importance for the Belorussian nation, known as the Manifesto of March 25. In the Manifesto it was stated that "Belorussia declares itself to be an independent National Republic."

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10/ The Bolshevik regime took away the independence of the Belorussian nation by force. The region was first occupied by the Germans, and in 1919 and 1920 it became the arena of the savage and devastating Soviet-Polish War which came to an end only in November , 1920. The peace treaty which the Soviets and the Poles signed in Riga was tragic for Belorussia. In it a nation of eighteen million(1) was dismembered into three parts:

1. According to other estimates the Belorussian nation at that time numbered not 18 but 20 and even 24 million persons.

about four million /2/ Belorussians were given by the Bolsheviks to Poland who, during her existence as a state tried, rashly but unsuccessfully, by every kind of intolerable method to turn Belorussians into Poles and Catholics. The Communist dictatorship was established over the remaining Belorussian territory. But even that remaining under the Communists was subdivided into two parts. Out of the six uyezds of the former Minskaya Guberniya (1) the Belorussian Soviet

1. The six uyezds of the former Minskaya Guberniya comprised the Minskoy, Borisovskiy, Igumenskiy, Bobrugskiy, Slutskiy, and Mozyrskiy uyezd.

Socialist Republic (B. S. S. R.) was organized. The Vitebskaya, Mogilevskaya, and newly organized Gomel'skaya Guberniya remained included in Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic
648 (R. S. F. S. R.). The six uyezds of the B. S. S. R. represented a very convenient base for the postwar struggle with Poland. Starting in the very first days after the conclusion of peace with Poland, the Soviets used every means to try and arouse discontent and alarm among the population, especially the Belorussians, who had been left in the power of Poland. The Soviets also attempted to undermine the Polish economy which was rather weak. To this end armed units of the G. P. U. were organized in the border regions of Belorussia and sent into Western Belorussia. These units plundered and burned estates, murdered and executed policemen and government officials. A certain Mukha, the leader of one of these units, was particularly renowned. These "insurgents" always had a place of

648 refuge on Soviet territory, and meanwhile Soviet propaganda interpreted the "exploits" of Mukha and other units as the anger of the Belorussians nation against capitalist Poland. From the B. S. S. R. special propagandistic literature was sent into western Belorussia, as were Communists prepared for underground work who carried on propaganda there as well as organizing Communist and Komsomol cells. Nor did the Poles remain in their debt. They also organized units and forays into the territory of Soviet Belorussia where they ravaged the revisional committees and the village soviets, in some cases not disdaining to conduct pogroms of the Jews. The raids which were made upon the towns of Kopyl' and Koydanov in the Minskaya oblast' are well known . . .

648 The destructive war and the Bolshevik terror greatly weakened the national forces of Belorussia. A significant part of the active political workers who had taken part in the all-Belorussian Congress and in the further work of creating an independent National Republic were forced to emigrate across the border. /3/ Only a few individuals remained in Belorussia and their number was somewhat augmented by those who returned from the front. At the time, the national-democratic intellegentsia estimated the political situation correctly. The Kremlin and Poland were pursuing their own political ends, which were completely foreign to the interests of the Belorussian nation. Warsaw had set itself the goal of turning Belorussians into Poles in the shortest possible period. And Moscow had destined Belorussia to be a convenient ground for the preparation of its own specific measures towards the quickest possible Communist revolution in the West and as a first step in neighboring Poland. Belorussian national forces could not reconcile themselves to such a destiny for their country. Immediately after the Soviet-Polish War there were attempts to preserve their independence by armed force. The famous Slutskiy uprising broke out in the end of 1920; more than ten thousand fighters for freedom and liberty took part in it. The Slutskiy uprising was quelled by the overwhelming strength of the Red Army. Belorussia was then covered with a thick net of partisan units, some of which resisted until as late as 1930. A correct appraisal of the situation led the Belorussian national leaders to the decision to elect the path of lengthy, painstaking, and patient work within the B. S. S. R., involving the elevation of the national consciousness of the masses and the preparation of young cadres for active work. When the Bolsheviks were forced to give up

668 'War Communism' which brought with it hunger and disorganization, and enter upon the New Economic Policy, many were filled with hopes of a regeneration of the Soviet power...

Editors Note: the sub-titles of this article are in English in the original Russian text. They have been copied here, except for any reference to the Ezhovshchina which is spelt Yezhovshchina in the original and which we spell Ezhovshchina.

Educational Campaign in Belorussia

Professor Vsevolod Ignatovskii played a leading role in the Belorussian national movement. He was the People's Commissar of Public Education of the BSSR (1). A group of archive nationalists

1. At first V. Ignatovskii was for a short while the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the B. S. S. R. of his biography in the Literaturnaya Entsiklopediya /Literary Encyclopedia/ by the Communist Academy, 1930, p. 417.

united around Professor Ignatovskii with whom a whole series of cultured and prominent public figures sympathized and who aided in the national work, although for various reasons they did not want to become openly involved. In the first place, it was necessary to bring out the nationally thinking intelligentsia which had been dispersed throughout the farthest corners of the province, having been driven from the cities in search of food during the time of famine in the cities. It was necessary to open and organize upper and middle s schools /4/ and prepare the youth for work in all fields of the national economy and culture. The narrow circle of leaders of the movement arrived at what seems at first sight to have been a strange conclusion: not to obstruct conscious young members of the intellegentsia from entering the Communist Party, even to suggest the idea and in some cases compel them to become Party members. It was considered that Belorussians, especially the intellegentsia, in the Party, would the more quickly reach leading positions in the Party and the administrative apparatus, and it was supposed that the national aims would be realized sooner and more successfully through the Party.

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214 The People's Commissariat of Public Education of Belorussia /Narkompros/ became the headquarters of activity. Here follows a short schematic description of the most important measures taken up until 1930. The Narkompros took measures to have the instruction in all schools translated into the native language. This was difficult work since the schools did not have textbooks in the native language, the lack of elementary readers in the primary schools being a particularly difficult obstacle to overcome. However in a comparatively short period old and experienced teachers compiled some elementary readers modeled upon the literary styles of Belorussian writers, and a famous Belorussian linguist compiled a school grammar of the native language (1).

1. Ia. Lesik compiled a school textbook of the Belorussian language; the first normative grammar of Belorussian on a scientific basis, adapted simultaneously for use in schools had been issued in 1918 by the Belorussian philologist, V. Tarashkevich, long before Lesik.

The majority of the presses in Belorussia had been destroyed during the war and in any case, they were not suitable for mass publication of textbooks. During the course of a year some textbooks were printed in Germany and a few in Wilno under the direction of the well known writer D. Zhilunovich who was a member of the collegium of Narkampros. He subsequently reorganized the publishing business and the presses in Minsk. With contemporary techniques, the work which he accomplished would not seem to be very great, but in those times, against a background of general devastation, it was quite an accomplishment.

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668 Normal schools were opened in Minsk and a number of other cities. The one in Minsk played a particularly positive role. It was staffed with the best teachers, and during the twenties was named after Professor Ignatovskii. The education in these normal schools was directed toward the preparation of teachers who were also politically active nationalists. Their graduates subsequently devoted themselves, with great success, to the cultural rebirth of their nation. /5/ Many of them finished universities, and out of the former pupils of the Minsk normal school there developed a number of talented poets and writers. To fill the great lack of teachers of

668 the Belorussian language one-year courses were made available in
871 the secondary schools. These courses remained available, as a provisional measure, for all, up to regular graduates of the pedagogical department of the Belorussian University. Taken all together these measures made it possible as early as the beginning of the academic year of 1924, to change the curriculum to the native language in schools, kindergartens, adult evening schools, and stations for the liquidation of illiteracy.

563 Parallel with the Belorussianization of the schools Narkompros[1]
871 took practical steps to guarantee their own languages to the schools of the national minorities. The work among the Jewish population was particularly successful. The special Jewish inspectors of Narkompros, and in the neighboring towns as well, worked intensively to open schools, kindergartens, orphan homes and libraries for the Jewish population. This great task was not always accomplished smoothly, and thus aroused some dissatisfaction against the zealous promulgators of the national policy. Under the new system parents did not have a free choice of schools for their children; besides, in the cities and especially among the Jewish intelligentsia, only Russian was spoken in the family, and the children experienced great difficulty in learning Hebrew when they got to the Jewish national schools. Then, in addition, after completing a Jewish secondary school they had a very limited choice of higher schools for further education. A thorough knowledge of Russian was necessary to pass the entrance examinations into an institution of higher learning outside Belorussia, and in the Belorussian university itself there was only one Jewish subdivision (section) in the educational department where the lectures were given in Hebrew. Therefore some parents went to work in the R.S.F.S.R. or sent their children to school there, and thus the Jewish secondary schools, especially the upper classes, were not full, having three to five pupils in a class. Nevertheless the work accomplished was great and fully responded to the national feelings of the masses among whom Zionistic tendencies still existed. Among the special normal schools in Belorussia were the pedagogical academy in Gomel' which had instruction in Hebrew, and the agricultural technical school in Kurasovshchina, not far from Minsk. Jewish children were fully assured of having seven-year schooling and even secondary schooling in some cities. Homeless orphans were collected in Jewish orphan asylums, and there were a sufficient number of kindergartens. /6/

[1] [the People's Commissariat of Public Education of Belorussia--Analyst]

563 Less significant was the network of educational institutions where
87/ the teaching was done in Polish, although in Narkompros there were special inspectors for Polish schools. The reasons for this situation will be told below.

873 Narkompros[1] directed particular attention to the organization and development of the Belorussian State University. Through a common effort this young cultural center established a serious course of study and acquired a well-deserved prestige. In a comparatively short time a solid group of well-known professors had been chosen, among them the following Belorussian scholars: the popular and generally respected philologist Ia. Lesik, the mathematician Krutalevich, Piotukhovich, who was a literary specialist, Shchekotikhin, who was a professor of art, as well as others. It should be noted that the first graduates of the University, in 1931 and 1932, were better than the later ones. The reason is that despite the rather difficult conditions of student life they were not distracted into other pursuits. They were required to learn, not to participate in various bombastic political campaigns and social undertakings, which were the affair of the Communist Party. Afterwards, unfortunately, the examinations of student activists were judged according to their participation in
66/ political campaigns. A prominent role in the administrative organization of the University was played by the rector, Professor Picheta, a man who had been very successfully selected for this high post. Although not a Belorussian himself, he worked actively and conscientiously to promulgate all measures necessary for strengthening the University. He was arrested in 1930 and, like many others who were arrested that same year, subjected to "investigation" because of a "Union for the Liberation of Belorussia" (the S. V. B. - in Belorussian "Sayuz Vyzvalen'nya Belorusi"), which was created at the time by the G. P. U. of the B. S. S. R. More will be said about this below. In the activity of the S. B. V. according to the "plan" (or as popularly put the "tale") of the G. P. U., Professor Picheta was to play the part of a "connecting link" between the S. B. V. and the "Union for the Liberation of Russia", also created for the occasion by the G. P. U. in Russia, which was to be headed by the well-known academician Platonov, a historian like Picheta. After the failure of the "activities" of the S. B. V., Professor Picheta, like the others, was sent into exile and served it in the city of Vyatka where he distributed tickets in the city dining rooms. Due to the stubborn petitions

1 [the People's Commissariat of Public Education of Belorussia--Analyst]

661 of his wife who had stayed in Moscow, he was liberated in 1934 by the personal intercession of Stalin in the Central Executive Committee of the U. S. S. R and went back to Moscow. He became a corresponding member of the All-Union Academy of Sciences, and when the political situation demanded that the Kremlin organize a Slavonic Committee, Professor Picheta was used to work on it. He died about three years ago, and in the Soviet press his death was noted as that of an outstanding scholar and, of course, a patriot. /7/

873 To further scientific work and unite the efforts of scientific and cultural workers, the Institute of Belorussian Culture (Inbelkul't) was set up in Minsk with Professor Ignatovskii as its head.[1] Relatively quickly, this Institute laid the foundations for the organization of a Belorussian Academy of Sciences. Then it was filled with graduate students from the first graduating classes of the University. Professor Ignatovskii left Narkompros and became the president of the Academy of Sciences.

874 In addition to the University of Belorussia the former Agricultural Institute was still functioning. At first it was located in Minsk but then changed its name to the Agricultural Academy and moved to the city of Gori-Gorkiy in the Orshanskiy Okrug. There it had plots of land for practical work and the appropriate laboratories. The agricultural high school had been there before the revolution, and the Higher Agricultural Institute before the Polish uprising of 1863. In addition there was a Veterinary Institute in Vitebsk. The Agricultural Academy and the Veterinary Institute were under the control and direction of the Commissariat of Agriculture of the B. S. S. R.

871 The Narkompros of the B. S. S. R. developed and put into effect a national educational system which was adapted to Belorussian conditions and differed somewhat from that of the R. S. F. S. R.[1] In the latter, the training comprised essentially a ten-year course of general education, while according to the system of the Narkompros of Belorussia the basis was a seven-year course of general education divided into two parts, comprising four and three years respectively. The academic year of 1925-1926 was the first year when the plan of general compulsory education on the basis of the first part of the seven-year course went into effect. (1) In the towns education was

1. Cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskai Entsiklopedia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1927 edition, Vol. V, p. 409.

[1 Beginning about 1920, cf. pp. 3-4, category 116 - Analyst]

871 on the basis of a full seven-year school. The system also planned to have technical schools opened with three-or four-year courses of study for the preparation of semi-qualified specialists. Professional and technical schools were based upon this seven-year system of general education and were the final link in the system of secondary education. The next level comprised institutions of higher education -- the universities and higher technical institutes. /8/ The night schools for adults were also adapted to the system of national education.

Periodicals and Cultural Activities

517 The many-sided cultural activity was a powerful stimulus for attracting the masses, particularly the youth. Youth was fired with the idea of a rebirth of the national culture.[1] The number of poets, writers, critics, scientific workers in history and geography, in the search for natural resources and in the studying of various kinds of problems grew tremendously in Belorussia. The Belorussian Academy of Sciences, the University, and the Agricultural Academy followed watchfully, occasionally challenging but always supporting the bold initiative of young innovators in literature, art, and research. The Belorussian State Publishing House did not refuse to publish the work of young poets and scholars, counting on their further development. The attentive attitude of national figures toward the young cadres inspired their efforts and distracted them from the often rather difficult living conditions.

204 The newspapers Zvezda /The Star/ and Sovetskaia Belorussia /Soviet Belorussia/ were printed in Minsk,[1] the first was considered a Party organ and the second an organ of the Soviet power. Local papers were also printed in the surrounding towns, and eventually each rayon had its own newspaper. Zvezda /The Star/ was considered the most influential although in reality its influence was determined largely by a certain fear of becoming an object of treatment on its pages. As it was a Party organ, Zvezda /The Star/ made pretensions to the infallibility and unimpeachibility of everything printed in it. It copied the general line of the Moscow Pravda and made every effort to imitate it. Newspapers were also printed in the Hebrew and in Polish. The popular literary-social magazine Polymia /The Flame/ Molodniak, /Youth/ Uzvysha /Upwards/. Polymia had an influence upon the formulation of a national

[1] [Beginning about 1920, cf. pp. 3-4, category 11c-Analyst]

204 consciousness as had Uzvysha upon the development of literature and art. Others were also published, and Molodniak was directed especially at youth. There were also departmental magazines, the organ of the rarkompros of the B. S. S. R., As'veta /Education/ was well known.

545 A special topic should be devoted to the development of the theatrical art.[1] In any mention of the successful development of the Belorussian national theatres, the very old First Belorussian Theater in Minsk deserves attention. Up until 1930, it was original in its creative work. With very infrequent exceptions it gave translated plays. It promoted a series of talented artists. /9/ The second Belorussian Theater was organized out of studios. A special role must be assigned to the Belorussian Traveling Theater which was organized and directed by the enthusiast Vladislav Golubok. Golubok was a man of many talents. He wrote several plays based on Belorussian national life which ran for long periods, and were removed from the repertoire of the Traveling Theater when the general destruction of everything national in Belorussia began. The services of V. Golubok and his theater to the Belorussian nation are exceptionally great. During its existence it made tours not only of the cities but even of the most inaccessible villages and hamlets under conditions which, materially and otherwise, were most difficult. The productions of the Traveling Theater were in accordance with the tastes of the national masses, always being accompanied by folksongs, music, and fold dancing. V. L. Golubok was deservedly the first person in Belorussia to acquire the title of national artist. In 1937 he was arrested by the N. K. V. D.

The Minsk Jewish Theater under the talented direction of Rafal'skii also enjoyed well-earned fame in Belorussia. It presented a series of plays on national themes. Among the Jews the play "Girsh Lekert" was particularly popular as it portrayed the hero, Girsh Lekert, of the revolutionary struggle in 1902 against the Tsarist government in Wilno.

814 The efforts of Belorussian and Jewish composers and collectors of folksongs, music, and folk dancing deserved particular attention. Their work at this time[1] was very opportune and is of colossal value. This aspect of the national folk culture had been neither investigated nor written down before the revolution . . . In ten or fifteen years, collectivization would have absorbed the beautiful national art of the Soviet, artifically created, 'chastushka,' composed by obliging

[1] [Beginning about 1920, cf. pp. 3-4, category IIC - Analyst]

814 literary and musical masters, in praise of the happy kolkhoz life and of the creator of all this happiness. The talented collector of [661] folksongs, the composer Terravskii, worked indefatiguably after the revolution. His highly useful efforts were frequently interrupted by the N. K. V. D. and eventually (during the Ezhovshchina) he was banished and the collection of folksongs with his own musical arrangements confiscated and withdrawn from circulation. Soviet ethics do not permit the use of the work of a repressed person, no matter how brilliant. Similar also was the fate of the other collector of folk culture, a man who, already advanced in years, left western Belorussia for the Soviet territory in hopes of finding wide scope for his activity. Part of the work has survived along with its authors -- there is hope that somewhere the works of /10/ Terravskii, Grinevich, and [545] others have been preserved. Folksongs, music, and dances were remembered, written down, and arranged.[2] They were performed with great love by various choruses, musical societies in the countryside (later in kolkhozes) and in workers' clubs. Ensembles organized by the Narkompros[1] performed at concerts and on the radio, presenting their programs to the accompaniment of native instruments.

517 814 The study of local lore was very widespread. It was the best loved activity of the village intellegentsia, especially of the teachers. In those days there was neither bureaucratic banality nor any official plan in these regional studies. It was founded upon their own initiative and inclinations, and a free choice of subjects for investigation and study. Those who pursued it devoted their leisure to the study and description of the folk culture, the historical past and ancient monuments of their region. The local flora and fauna were studied and measures were taken to protect types which were becoming extinct (beaver colonies). In some places they published their own works (Gomel') and organized museums of the local displays. They worked voluntarily and were not paid for it. At first the study of local lore was under the tutelage of the Narkompros[1] of the B. S. S. R. and afterwards of the Academy of Sciences which published a special magazine devoted to the subject called, /Nash Krai /Our Country/.

The Land Problem, Boundaries

423 The land question was the most painful and unsettled one in Belorussia. Before the revolution arrangements for the use of the land by the peasantry were different from those in Russia . . . In Belorussia

1 [the People's Commissariat of Public Education of Belorussia -- Analyst]

2 [Beginning about 1920, cf. pp 3-4, category 116 - Analyst]

423 the land was hereditary property, which had the positive results of continual and steady use of the land and the negative one of constant subdivision of the peasant holdings in the country. The Bolshevik uprising did not bring about any significant improvements in the life of the small holders as sovkhozes and kolkhozes were organized on the large estates. Up until 1930, D. Prishchepov, a former Socialist-Revolutionary, was the head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture. He had managed to live abroad and become acquainted with agricultural conditions in Denmark and Germany. Upon his return to Belorussia he contemplated a series of measures which he considered the more useful since they were in accordance with the desires of the great mass of the Belorussian peasantry. So as to increase the land fund and distribute it among those who had little or none, Prishchepov managed to abolish a part, although an insignificant one, of the Soviet farms and also to bring about significant reductions in the land belonging to these establishments. As the basic unit of land to be used, Prishchepov chose the small village of ten to twenty peasant farms, with comfortable farmsteads of up to one hectare in size. /11/ 341 Even in those times it cost him[1] a great effort to prove the advantage of the small village over the large one as a method of land exploitation. The necessity of rapid reconstruction of the system of land tenure in Belorussia was obvious. In the first place there was the question of what to do with the reserve land which had been given for temporary use to the landless peasants and those with small holdings. Then, it was proposed to apportion crowded and disorganized large villages among small ones. Part of the peasantry wanted small separate farms under the new system, but Prishchepov could not officially establish separate farmsteads. In practice it happened as an exception that, when lands were being distributed in the woods, separate farms were 668 cut out as well as small villages. . . To placate the theoreticians, Prishchepov[1] had to assure them that it was very easy to make the transformation from a small village to an agricultural commune. Prishchepov knew quite well how absurd these assurances were, but being one of the leaders of the national movement he was guided by the interests of the country and not by the presuppositions of the 654 Communists which at the time were both unclear and confused. In addition to increasing agricultural assistance Prishchepov[1] introduced a series of measures designed to encourage improvements on the holdings of independent peasants. Various types of agricultural exibition

[1] [D. Prishchepov, head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture, beginning about 1920 to 1930 - Analyst]

654 were widely promoted by Narkomzem where diplomas and testimonials were presented and prizes of goods and cash awarded. All these measures of D. Prishchepov were subsequently brought against him as accusations, to show that he was against the socialist forms of agriculture and that his work was not only harmful but outright sabotage.

423 The "gathering together" of the Belorussian lands and their unification with the B. S. S. R. was completed only in the beginning of 1927 ... The question of consolidating within the B. S. S. R. regions which were tied to it economically as well as having a homogeneous population had been raised several times before the Kremlin ... The problem was not solved until 1924 partly by the annexation of a

000 section of the Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces. On the occasion of the annexation of these regions an extraordinary session of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R. was convoked, with workers and peasants also participating. The President of the Central Executive Committee of the R. S. F. S. R., M. Kalinin, was present at the session, together with two well-known Comintern figures -- the Poles Felix Kohn and Tomasz Dombalj. During his own speech Dombalj turned to the loge of the Polish counsul and cried out in a burst of revolutionary enthusiasm, "Remember that only we have the right to speak in the name of Poles and peasants!" Dombalj was a deputy to the Polish Sejm and for belonging to the Communist Party had been tried and exchanged for someone in the Soviet Union. The future Soviet Marshall, Tukhachevskii, was also present at the session, and his restrained and correct deportment contrasted with that of the Caucasian, Gai, the commander of the Cavalry Corps, /12/ who paced up and down nervously during his speech and shouted, "We will water our horses in the Vistula yet!" The session was officially designated as a triumphant celebration of the correctness of Soviet policy toward the nationalities. M. Kalinin, by attending, emphasized the "voluntary accession" of the territory of the B. S. S. R.; the Polish Communists who were present demonstrated their solidarity with the Soviets in questions of policy toward minorities, in opposition to the policy of Poland which had taken over western Belorussia while General Zhilunovich forcibly occupied Wilno. The speeches of Tukhachevskii, the deputy director of the Red Army General Staff, and Gai, who had taken part in the raid, on Warsaw, even though it was unsuccessful, bore witness to the unsatisfied pretensions to Poland which were backed up with armed might.

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Only toward the end of 1926, after the most persistent petitioning in the Kremlin, and at that time petitioning had not yet become perilous, the question of uniting the Gomel'Guberniya to the B. S. S. R. was raised. However M. Kalinin himself, the President of the Central Executive Committee of the R. S. F. S. R., came out sharply against unification. The Kremlin was forced to resort to a peculiar sort of plebiscite in order to refute the pretensions of the Belorussians. It organized a special commission with the Latvian, Peters, as president, which was to determine on the spot what language was spoken by the inhabitants of Gomel' Guberniya. It was decided that the population had forgotten its language and finally become Russified. No research was undertaken to determine where the population belonged ethnologically. The commission traveled around the sizable territory of the Gomel' Gubernıya using the following method for its investigations: upon arriving in some inhabited place and meeting the peasantry, the members would enter upon some sort of unofficial conversation. This was taken down in shorthand, and an analysis of the notes refuted the calculations of those who had opposed the inclusion of Gomel' Guberniya in the B. S. S. R. The real reasons for the opposition to having the Guberniya transferred were of an economic nature. Gomel' Guberniya is very rich in various raw materials, especially high quality forests which are so situated that transportation of the wood is very convenient. It is criss-crossed in many directions by railroad lines and convenient water routes. A well equipped match industry is centered there, one which at that time was the most active in the U. S. S. R., and there is a paper industry in Dobrush. Obviously it was not intended that the economy of the B. S. S. R. be strengthened at the expense of that of the R. S. F. S. R. This is confirmed by the fact that such industrial centers as Zlynka, Novozybkov, Klintsy, and Starodub, all within twenty or thirty kilometers of Gomel', were not given to the B. S. S. R., simply because some match factories and other manufacturing are located there. The fact of the unification itself passed unnoticed by the masses. Gomel' Guberniya was included in the B. S. S. R. without the customary fanfare and pomp. /13/ The Belorussian nationalist circles were faced with new problems. It was indispensible to take all measures to include the new territory with its Belorussian population within the general scope of operations as quickly as possible, and, moreover, this transitional process had to be accomplished very carefully and painlessly. It all

depended on the capable efforts of the new Belorussian workers who were sent into what had been Gomel' Guberniya. They were able to cope with the task.

Minority Problems

The equality on the Belorussian territory of the four official languages, Belorussian, Russian, Polish, and Jewish, was recognized by a govermental decree. In practice only Belorussian was at all widely used, and Russian was employed in dealing with institutions of the U. S. S. R. Jewish and Polish were spoken in the national schools, kindergartens, theaters, libraries, and so on. The severity with which equality of the four languages was enforced sometimes became absurd. In the town of Rechitsa in 1928, at a municipal teachers conference, one participant who was the principal of a Jewish school made her observations in a speech in Jewish. Of course an interpreter had to be used. A Belorussian schoolteacher, Mokhnach, who had been renowned in the past for his liberal convictions and activities, but who unfortunately was versed in the unexpected twists and turns of Soviet policy, proposed quite correctly that all speakers use "Russian, as it is the most widely understood." For this proposal, which would appear to have been quite innocent, Mokhnach was accused of Great Russian chauvinism, immediately fired from his job, excluded from the trade union, and also deprived of a pension after his forty-five years of service in the school system. This shows just how unsuccessfully the Soviets could choose a subject upon whom to demonstrate how severely and unrelentingly anyone would be punished who transgressed against the Stalinist policy towards the minorities.

Special court chambers where litigation was conducted in Jewish were opened in the large cities to serve the Jewish population. In small towns and in some larger ones where Jews lived in compact groups, local and village soviets were formed -- providing service for the population in its native language. /14/

The national work concerning the so-called Polish population of Belorussia was a rather special case. In Minsk and in other cities there were several responsible workers /in the nationalist movement/ who were Poles by nationality. They were almost all Communists and native-born Poles, for the most part deriving from the Polish Socialist Party (P. P. S.). Moreover, twenty-five percent of the native

[62] Moreover, twenty-five percent of the native
563 Belorussian population professed Catholicism, while seventy-five
[798] percent was Orthodox. Even before the revolution the Catholic priests, and they were almost all Poles, made propaganda in the Catholic churches to the effect that all who professed Catholicism were Poles. As a matter of fact these "Poles" had not even mastered the Polish
563 language and were Belorussian by nationality. In the heyday of the
661 nationalities policy, the Polish Communists, perhaps only for reasons of propaganda and of course under the auspices and with the permission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, renamed the whole Koydanovskiy Rayon, which is situated on the Polish-Belorussian boundary and has a Belorussian population of some thirty thousand, the Polish National Rayon. Kaydanov (sic), the rayon center, was renamed Dzerzhinsk and the whole rayon called Dzerzhinskiy. In the rayon center, on the square dedicated to the fierce, even though dead, chief of the rayon, a monument was erected to Dzerzhinskii which portrayed him standing straight up on a pedestal in a full-length soldier's overcoat and with a long face and a small beard. In the National Rayon compulsory promulgation of the Polish language was begun, a measure which the population had difficulty in comprehending. All institutions, schools, and village reading-rooms were changed over to Polish and the rayon newspaper came out in Polish. The population was mystified by these newly-created difficulties. After 1930, all the efforts to organize the Polish National Rayon in the name of Dzerzhinskii were pronounced a diversion of Polish spies. The higher leaders and organizers of the rayon were arrested and punished severely. Such a fate also overtook the Shestakovskiy Polish Soviet, named after the Polish communist Markhlevskii, in the Kopyl' Rayon, Minsk Oblast'. The Dzerzhinskiy Rayon retained the name of its chief and was once again called a Belorussian rayon. Both the village soviet and the local population of this ill-fated region were punished, almost one half of the population finding itself in Siberia eventually. Thus the completely innocent local populace paid dearly for the nationalities policy.

701 Belorussianization extended even into parts of the Red Army. The
563 Second Division in Minsk and the Thirty-third in Mogilev, for example, were renamed Belorussian territorial divisions in 1927. These two divisions were recruited exclusively in Belorussia -- it was intended to change the commands and the training into Belorussian in as short a period as possible. To prepare a staff of officers half the

students at the Minsk officers school were also recruited exclusively from among Belorussians, /15/ and all the training as well as the commands were given in Belorussian. A special corps of specialists on Belorussia, with the experienced philologist, Baranovskii, as their leader, was selected for work in the officers' school. All the military regulations of the Red Army were translated into Belorussian. But the Belorussianization of these two divisions was sharply curtailed after 1930, the Belorussian specialists were fired from the officers school, and a significant number of them were subsequently arrested together with their leader. By 1932 no traces remained of the Belorussianization of these two territorial divisions. The Second Division, quartered in Minsk, had its name changed from Territorial to Experienced Regular Division, and the Belorussianization of parts of the Red Army was pronounced a harmful diversionary activity.

At one point, in order to strengthen the Soviet state, the slogan of "going to the soil" was promoted in Belorussia. The main reason for this was to fill the Soviet state apparatus with local workers independent of their nationality, and by this it was intended that the local Party workers, being native inhabitants of the area and knowing the language, customs, and way of life of the Belorussians, would be the more close to the national masses. However this campaign did not have any widespread success and was swallowed up by ensuing campaigns which were of a broader nature.

Propaganda among the Peasants

In 1924, a movement began in Belorussia under the noisy title of "Let's face the land," and it involved the mass dispatch of responsible workers from the centers into the rayon and village soviets for agitation and organizational work there. When the NEP had attained a steady tempo the peasantry found itself in a very difficult situation. The prices of agricultural products were low and those of factory made products immeasurably high. For example, a peasant had to pay no less than 320 kilograms of grain for an ordinary Tula samovar. At the time the hard and reliable Soviet chervonets had acquired a solid position in the economy. But the peasants had no chervontsi . . . To raise the depressed mood of the peasantry propagandists were sent out for extended periods, and some of them were even left in the rayons for permanent work as responsible Party leaders. It was decided simultaneously to advance non-Party peasants and factory workers to responsible positions. Such a new worker was

called a 'vydvizhenets' /promoted worker/. Generally such workers were appointed as deputies of various kinds; independent work was not given to them /16/ because of their non-Party status and the fear of distortions in the Party line . . . To tell the truth they often had to sail with the wind, orient themselves according to Party workers, and compromise with their convictions, especially in settling peasant problems. The leaders of the Belorussian national movement made use of this well-advertised and all-embracing campaign[1] to send out their best propagandists for further work in planting the Soviet state apparatus "in the soil" and especially to select vydvizhenets workers /for their own ends/. It would be possible to mention many successful vydvizhenets, as examples. For instance in the Slutskiy Okrug, the peasant vydvizhenets Fedorovich enjoyed unquestionable authority, occupying the post of deputy president of the okrug executive committee. The peasant vydvizhenets Dubovtsev made such a favorable impression with his work that as a result he even became Deputy President of the Belorussian Supreme Soviet. He possessed the necessary qualifications in administrative work, was modest both in his personal life and on the job, and a promoter of the national work. Part of the vydvizhenets group returned to their former jobs in the kolkhozes and factories, and a very insignificant portion entered the Party.

The official organs which had the job of guiding the national work were the so-called National Commissions in the center and the district centers. The staff of a National Committee was composed of representatives of the separate nationalities. However they had no practical or organizational significance. The work was carried on outside their auspices and without their guidance. It was almost a dead superstructure of which there were and are many in the Soviet system.

Belorussians in Poland

Everything done by the nationalists in the B. S. S. R. had a colossal influence upon the Belorussians, especially upon the youth and intelligentsia, living in western Belorussia, which was under Polish rule. There they had no right even having been deprived of the right to acquire property. Without renouncing its nationality the intelligentsia could not find work. The Belorussian primary and high schools were closed, although they were

[1] [To raise the morale of the peasants caught in an unfavorable economic situation. Cf. p. 19, cat. 116--Analyst]

661 kept in operation through private donations. Belorussian students
553 could not enter the higher schools. The national social organization "Belorusskaia Gramada," which had 120,000 members, was closed and its leaders tried and imprisoned. The Orthodox clergy had to use Polish to preach in the churches and to teach the Law of God in the schools. The population of western Belorussia knew that in the B. S. S. R. a state was being built, that /17/ the official language was Belorussian, that a Belorussian Academy of Sciences, a State University, and other institutions of higher learning were in existence and that admission to them did not present any particular difficulties--on the contrary there were the so-called workers' high schools which prepared those who lacked secondary education for admission into the universities. National theaters were in operation, and literature
661 and poetry flourished. The Soviet press, which penetrated into western
166 Belorussia, as well as the radio and underground Communist organizations intensified their propaganda about the work in the B. S. S. R.. The Soviet Consulate in Warsaw, by using the Deputy Consul Ul'ianov who was himself from a Minsk family, generously supplied dollars to finance anti-Polish propaganda, the pro-Communist press, and various organizations in western Belorussia. As a result of this, hundreds of young people streamed across the border into the B. S. S. R., illegally and at great risk and danger to themselves, in the hopes of getting into the bright lecture halls of the University of Belorussia. The intelligentsia also crossed the border to find work and to find some scope for their abilities. How much bitter disillusionment there was after 1930, how much inconsolable grief and sorrow for their unfulfilled hopes and broken young lives. Led by their enthusiasm, they trustingly dashed into the perfidious and deceiving Soviet flame. Who could have supposed then that this great constructive work would be pitilessly crushed and that thousands of Belorussians would perish in the cellars of the N. K. V. D. or in concentration camps.

First Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Community Party of Belorussia

665 Up to 1930 there were several first secretaries of the Communist Party of Belorussia. All of them were envoys of the Kremlin, in fact plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union--guardians, preservers and exponents of the general line of the

665 Politburo. Thus it was already determined that the first secretaries of the Communist Party were always sent to Belorussia and were never Belorussians. Each of these envoys had a greater or lesser effect upon the course of the national work. There were no Belorussian Communists with pre-revolutionary records as most of them had not entered the Party before 1920.

The First Secretary of the Party from 1921 to 1924 was the Pole, Waclaw Bogutskii (1). In those times large scale national work

1. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia, 1927, Vol. VI, p. 623.

had not progressed further than a gathering of forces and appraisal of the situation. Bogutskii had no special influence of the lives of the Belorussian people. His activity consisted mainly of speeches at meetings and assemblies, and as an orator of that type he was not bad. After a short period Bogutskii /18/ was replaced by Asatkin (Viadimirskii) (1) who was Russian by nationality. He did not prove

1. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia /Small Soviet *Encyclopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. IV, p. 364.*

anything special. Under him the Vitebsk and Mogilevsk Guberniyas were joined to the B. S. S. R., and after a short while Asatkin was recalled to Moscow. After him came Krinitskii, also Russian. He carried on his Party work for almost three years (1924-1927) (2).

2. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia/ Small Soviet Encylopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. IV, p. 364.

By nature Krinitskii was a careerist--showing little independence in his work and always orienting himself by the Kremlin. At that time Belorussian influence predominated in the Party, and Krinitskii was alone. To further their own interests the Belorussians made use of the Kremlin's slogan concerning the building of a national culture that was "national in form and socialist in content." Krinitskii could not obstruct the national work--what was important to him was somehow to keep an eye on it to make sure that the culture preserved a socialist content. Krinitskii had no authority

665 among the Party rank-and-file. He was recalled to Moscow to the agitation and propaganda section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. After his removal to Moscow he quickly forgot about the work in Belorussia. While director of the agitation and propaganda section in the Kremlin, Krinitskii at one conference sharply rebuked the president of Belorussia who was making a speech in Belorussian since he had not fully mastered Russian. Krinitskii reproved him, recommending that he speak in Russian.

After Krinitskii, in 1928, the First Secretary was the Latvian, Knorin. His activity left a definite mark, the more so since the Kremlin twice sent him to Belorussia as secretary. Knorin got acquainted with the leaders of the national movement and understood the strivings of the Belorussians for national rebirth, aided in the national work, and supported the initiative of the Belorussians. After he left, in 1928, Jan Gamarnik (1) an Austrian by nationality /19/

1. The Large Soviet Encyclopedia states that in his youth Gamarnik lived in Kiev. In Minsk he was considered a Czech. As we know, Gamarnik was subsequently shot together with Tukhachevskii. Cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia, /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. XIV, p. 456.

became First Secretary. Correct and tactful, a good orator and organizer, he did not introduce any changes in the national work. Gamarnik did not become intimate with anyone, especially in Belorussia. His activity did not last long--first appointed Director of the Political Administration of the Belorussian Military District he was then transferred to the post of Director of the Political Administration of the Red Army. In about 1928 or 1929 the Kremlin sent the Estonian, Gei, as secretary to Belorussia.

665 186 In a comparatively short period the national work in Belorussia had carved a broad path for itself. The rebirth of a national culture was an indisputable fact; cadres of youth had been trained and posted all throughout the state apparatus. The region was healing itself of the wounds inflicted by wars and occupations; it appeared that the Communism of the war years had gone, never to return. There was some thought of conquering new positions since the national work and all its measures had found unquestioning support among the broad masses of the Belorussian people... The Party leadership,

665 sent by the Politburo in the persons of the first secretaries, in the
186 majority of cases adopted a strictly formal attitude toward the national work. It is possible that only Knorin really understood the situation. Secretary Krinitskii learned Belorussian and occasionally made speeches in it, but even so it was only to produce a good impression on the Kremlin and in order to assist his Party career in this way, that he did it.

The First Victims

Up to 1930, there had only been one trial aimed directly at a
661 nationalist. In 1926, Iu. Listopad, a non-Party teacher of Belorussian in the high schools, was arrested in Slutsk. He was tried in Minsk for organizing some sort of plot against the Soviet Authority. The trial was open to the public, and there were lawyers for both the presecution and defense. The students gave Listopad stormy ovations, and flowers were even brought to him during the trial. However the whole affair was cleverly and insidiously organized. The judges were members of the Belorussian intelligentsia and the Public Prosecutor, a well-known nationalist writer, D. Zhilunovich. /20/ It was all so well arranged that even Listopad's warmest supporters were forced to judge and condemn him. He was sentenced to five years in a reformatory--as the prisons were still called at that time. The shadows continued to thicken even after Listopad's trial had been forgotten. The twilight of the NEP was coming, and by the end of 1928 the cities were beginning to feel the shortage of agricultural products. In the Ukraine and other grain producing areas the Soviet regime was beginning to organize the first Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), the forerunners of the collectivization which was soon to sweep over the peasantry.

In the beginning of 1931, Professor Vsevolod Ignatovskii, an academician and the leader of the Belorussian nationalists, fell a victim of the B. P. U. He had been called in for interrogation and afterwards shot himself in his own apartment. (1)

1. The suicide of Professor Ignatovskii was the last, as well as the most decisive act in the particular "case" of the S. V. B.* with which the G. P. U. had intended to connect him. The "case" was closed, and all those implicated were sent into exile in administrative functions--only the Communists Balitskii, Prishchepov, Al. Adamovich, and Il'iuchenos /sic/ were sent to concentration camps.

* Belorussian abbreviation, Cf. p. 6 meaning:Union for the liberation of Belorussia.

661 Professor Ignatovskii was widely known and very popular for his prominent activities. In those days the G. P. U. did not yet dare to throw him in a cellar and make short work of him. As a result of his suicide there were persistent rumors that the G. P. U. had succeeded in getting Professor Ignatoviskii to name those members of the national movement who had taken upon themselves to check the Soviet regime in Belorussia and establish a democratic system. The professor preferred death, but even before his suicide the movement had been dealt a telling blow by the arrest of the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the B. S. S. R., Dimitrii Prishchepov. Himself a son of the people and a former teacher he was well able to understand the age long striving of the Belorussian peasant for a private farm of his own. He knew the reasons for the backwardness, poverty, and need 241 of the countryside. Before collectivization, his activities had been 423 directed toward strengthening the private working peasant's position 661 by building them homesteads which were generally grouped in small hamlets but frequently isolated. This arrangement gave the peasant wide scope for his own initiative, and he could also draw on state agricultural assistance. /21/ This tendency in the work of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture turned out to be in complete contradiction to the Kremlin's avowed policy of collectivizing agriculture, and besides, an unheard of tempo of collectivization was demanded, with the country's total efforts directed at the destruction of the private peasants' farmstead to be replaced by the other, so-called socialist, form of agriculture. The most prosperous farms were ruined completely and their proprietors assigned to the outlawed category of kulaks -- then they were carted away under inhuman conditions and sent out to the most godforsaken and uninhabited regions of Siberia. The peasants who still remained unsubdued were tagged as podkulachnik' and subjected to public persecution and economic pressure in the form of a high head tax -- in spite of the fact that these peasants were the ones who had most of the diplomas and certificates which the Soviet government had given out for high showings in animal husbandry, gardening, truck 661 farming, etc. The People's Commissariat of Agriculture had to play first violin in this destruction -- in other words it had to destroy

1 [D. Prishchepov, Peoples Commissar of Agriculture to 1930 - Analyst]

661 pitilessly everything that had been created as a labor of love during the NEP. New people were needed, and Prishchepov was classed as an enemy of the people, a wrecker, middleman, protector of the kulaks, and a promulgator of the private homesteads and small villages which were so harmful to the socialist forms of agriculture. In official documents and propaganda his work was contemptuously called the "prishchepovshchina." However, the besmirched activities of Prishchepov the People's Commissar of Agriculture, left a happy and lasting memory among the Belorussian peasantry.

The death of the academician, Professor Ignatovskii, and the arrest of D. Prishchepov were not isolated instances. Almost simultaneously a large group of culturally and economically prominent figures were arrested, among them the very popular philologist and academician Ia. Lesik, the renowned Belorussian geographer and economist, Academician Smolich, the Secretary of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences, Academician V. Lastovskii, Picheta, who was rector of the University, and others.

665 625 There were changes in the attitude and approach of the G. P. U. This organization received a standing order which was not to be changed for the arrest of Party members. As late as 1930, the G. P. U. had quite openly not meddled in the internal affairs of the Communist Party as the Party itself held court over its unsubmissive members and administered punishment. It had its own controlling and punitive organs in the Central Control Commission which had its plenipotentiaries throughout the republics and oblasts. . . . /22/

Anton Balitskii and the "Odessa" Group (1)

1. For information on the "Odessites" see the article by A. Sakovich, "Belorussi v Odesse" /"Belorussians in Odessa" Beda, /Misery/ No. 5 (10), May, 1952.

661 The People's Commissar of Public Education of the B. S. S. R., Anton Balitskii, was also a victim of the G. P. U. Until 1928 he was a deputy in the Narkomat, but even then he actually directed all its activities. Professor V. Ignatovskii had many other responsibilities besides the Narkomat of Public Education. He devoted a lot of attention to the Institute of Belorussian Culture and gave lectures at the University and in the Agricultural Institute; literary and scientific work also took up a lot of his time. He had written several studies of

661 Belorussian history and his Korotkii Ocherk po Istorii Belorussi /Short Essay on Belorussian History/ remained a basic text in the high schools until his death.

In the first part of 1950 A. Balitskii was fired from his job in the Narkompros /People's Commissariat of Public Education/ but even after this was not arrested. Evidently the G. P. U. had not yet worked out a plan for the "major" arrests. It had to have some evidence to try him for implication in a plot. In effecting this the G. P. U. considered it fundamental to enlarge and fill in the accusatory evidence with the testimony of various individuals who would later be arrested. At the time the arrest of these distinguished members of the Republic was still a sensation, and no one was yet accustomed to mass arrests. The Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, after firing Balitskii from the Narkompros, passed a resolution to demote him to so-called lower level work as an agitator and propagandist in the railroad shops of Gomel'. This decision was obviously the consequence of pressure brought by Belorussian members of the Bureau, who contemplated removing him from the limelight for a while so that people in Minsk would forget about him. The official motivation for such a decision was to give A. Balitskii, after his many blunders, a chance to reforge himself in the workingman milieu of a large factory such as the shop in Gomel', where more than two thousand laborers were working and which was considered to be functioning under Belorussian conditions. It should be pointed out that A. Balitskii possessed great organizational abilities, the capacity for work, and the knack of picking out the necessary capable assistants. Under his guidance there had been worked out and put into practice rather successfully a general plan of initiating universal compulsory courses in the Belorussian educational system./23/ The old teacher, Dm. Stsetsuro also put a lot of effort and his enormous practical experience into this project. Balitskii belonged to the so-called group of Belorussian "Odessites". While an officer in the First World War he, together with other members of the army on the Rumanian Front, had organized the Belorussians in the front lines after the February Revolution. This group of organizers than became located in Odessa and kept up connections with the nationalist workers in Minsk. After the front collapsed the Germans occupied a sizable share of Belorussian territory, and the Bolsheviks set themselves the task of "liberating" Belorussia with Red Army detachments. At the time a very prominent Belorussian named Stepan Nekrashevich was in Odessa with Balitskii.

661 Afterwards he put a lot of work into organizing the Institute of Belorussian Culture and later was President of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences. In Odessa on January 13, 1919, Nekrashevich was careless enough to greet the French general, Bartel, in the name of the Belorussians. This became known in Minsk and when the National-Democrats were being dispersed, S. Ia. Vol'fson in his work against them, Ideologiia i Metodologiia Natsdemovshchiny, /The Ideology and Methodology of the National-Democrats/ wrote, "S. Nekrashevich welcomed General Bartel in Odessa, 'On behalf of the National Center of Belorussia, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in the South of Russia, who bring us not only the hope but, I would say, the guarantee of a speedy liberation from the oppressions of the Bolsheviks who for more than fifteen months have been devastating our country' . . . Nekrashevich begged General Bartel for armed assistance." (pages 69-70)

Belorussia became Soviet; Belorussians and Odessites, returned to Minsk, and the majority of them held responsible positions. The welcome Nekrashevich had extended to General Bartel was not forgotten, however, but was unearthed from the archives and figured on every occasion as a shining example of the political untrustworthiness not only of himself but of the whole group of "Odessites." The calculations of the Belorussians were not justified. His appointment to Gomel' did not save him from the G.P.U. He was arrested before he even started work there, condemned, and sentenced to work out his term of punishment on Medvezh'ja Gora near the construction of the White Sea Canal. Evidently Balitskii died there since we have no more information about him. His wife's death was also tragic. Being a doctor of medicine she was not arrested but later went insane.

Zhilunovich and the "Nats-Dems" /24/

214 668 The Belorussian State Publishing House played a prominent role in the national work. It was the only institution of this kind in Belorussia and issued all printed matter with the exception, of course, of newspapers and periodicals. This publishing house also regulated the priority of everything else published. It was headed by the outstanding Belorussian writer and politician of the older generation, Dimitrii 668 Zhilunovich (who used the pseudonym Tsishka Gartnyi).

668 Zhilunovich (who used the pseudonym Tsishka Gartnyi). Evidently it was a lot harder to square accounts with him, since he was the organizer of the B. S. S. R. and the first president of its government; Stalin knew him personally as he was Commissar of Nationalities when Soviet Belorussia was being organized. However, Zhilunovich was removed from the directorship of the press even though he was left in the Party.

668 The fate of the creator[1] of the B. S. S. R. is tragic and instructive.

661 Coming from a workingman's family in the revolutionary town of Kopyl', Minsk Gubernia, his life was difficult and eventful. Unlike other remote towns, Zhilunovich's birthplace distinguished itself by the organized revolutionary activity of its population. This is witnessed by the fact that in 1905 the government had to detail a whole company to this locality to preserve order. In those days it was possible to meet representatives of all the revolutionary parties here -- Socialist-Revolutionaries, Social-Democrats, Narodniks, and a rather large number of Bundists. Zhilunovich spent his childhood and early years in this revolutionary environment, working as a tanner; later he went to big cities like Riga and St. Petersburg. In 1917 he was immersed in revolutionary activity up to his ears, he even laid aside his writing. During the NEP, while the Soviet power was becoming stabilized in Belorussia, simultaneously, significant successes were being attained in the national work. Zhilunovich, and other nationalists with him, drew some erroneous conclusions and committed a series of political mistakes. A convinced democrat and nationalist, he put a high value on the culture and way of life of the West. He admired the order and organization of German life, where he had spent more than a year while directing the printing of textbooks for Belorussian schools. He sincerely believed that the B. S. S. R. was going to be a national, democratic republic. Many of the Belorussian politicians of the time shared this mistaken view and Moscow made use of it. Zhilunovich was entrusted with the mission of "persuading" Belorussian emigrants, and especially former members of the government of the Belorussian National Republic, to give up their mandates from the /25/ Belorussian Congress and return to Minsk where they would be given responsible posts. Not yet experienced in the Kremlin's methods a number of eminent Belorussian politicians listened to these persuasions and returned to their homeland. They were all subsequently liquidated by the G. P. U.

In 1926, Zhilunovich was one of the initiators and organizers of the Academic Conference for reforming the Belorussian orthography

1 [Dimitri Zhilunovich - Analyst]

and alphabet. Many Belorussian emigrants came from abroad to be present at it. The brigade of the Marxist-Leninist department of the philological section of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences, in exposures of National-Democracy, writes about the ~~Conference~~ as follows, "The Academic Conference for reforming the Belorussian orthography and alphabet was in fact an open demonstration by National-Democratic counter-revolutionary forces - those in the B. S. S. R. as well as those who were abroad at the time and came to the Conference from their emigration -- Lastovskii, Ezovitov, Zhilka, Golovinskii, and others" (pages 110-111). In the hall where the Academic Conference was held there were no portraits of the leader, no Soviet flag, and naturally no propagandistic slogans of any kind. All this was possible, of course, in 1926, when they were trying to show the Belorussian emigrants that cultural activity in the B. S. S. R. has no connections with political affairs. Zhilunovich paid dearly for all this, from 1930 until his very death. Everything was brought up against him, and in 1933 he was expelled from the Party during the purge. At the end of 1936 or the beginning of 1937, he was arrested. He went out of his mind from the tortures and torment of cross-examination and was sent to Mogilev to the prisoners' division of a hospital for the mentally ill. There he either died or was poisoned. In the same year, one of his admirers, peculiarly enough a chief of the regional militia, secretly tried to find out where this martyr was buried. But the G. P. U. is good at hiding its tracks and the search met with no success whatsover.

Mass Arrests in Minsk --1930-1931

Mass arrests took place in Minsk in the middle of 1930. The provinces escaped almost unscathed, but prominent Belorussian cultural figures were arrested from the Academy of Sciences, the University, the Narkompros, and some in the Narkomzem /People's Commissariat of Agriculture/. Among those arrested was People's Commissar of Agriculture Prishchepov's deputy, Aleksandr (Ales') Adamovich -- and "Odessite" like Balitskii and Nekrashevich. While still a youth he had participated ardently in the work of the Bobrujsk Uyezd, Minsk Guberniya. /26/ After several years his ardor cooled, and in about 1925 he became a zealous nationalist. To his confederates, Adamovich whole-heartedly and sincerely confessed and repented that during the first years of his Soviet work,

because of inexperience, he had not been sufficiently sensitive to the needs of the disinherited Soviet peasantry. Quite soon he grew wise to the intent, course, and tactics of the Communist Party. Even when in prison in Minsk he was absolutely undismayed by his arrest and according to the accounts of eyewitnesses would have been rather chagrined if by some miracle he had been released. They sent him to work out his sentence in the Solovetskiy Concentration Camp. One of the surviving inmates of that camp, the Ukrainian Pidhainyl, writes in his memoirs under the title, Nedostreliannye /The Unexecuted : literally means 'The Not Completely Executed' -- Translator./ on page 115, about Adamovich, "To tell the truth I did not come across Adamovich at Solovkiy but he was in solitary confinement in Moreplav where he had been accused of some sort of deadly Fascist sins, and it seems that there he got ten years more." There are no further traces of Adamovich. Even though young and strong it appears that he perished during the severe solitary confinement.

Among cultural workers, the majority of those driven out of Belorussia in 1930 and 1931 had formulated their political convictions already before the revolution. Many of them were authors of learned works. Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapol'skii, a professor of history had his first treatise published in 1891 in Kiev, Ocherki Istorii Krivichskoi i Dregovichskoi Zemel do kontsa XII stoletiia /Essays on the History of the Krivichi and the Dregovichi to the End of the Twelfth Century/; Litovskaia metrika /Lithuanian Metrics/, was published in St. Petersburg in 1903; Issledovaniia i stat'i /Research and Articles/, Vol. I, Etnografiia i sotsiologiia /Ethnography and Sociology/, Obychnoe pravo /Common Law/, Statistika /Statistics/, Belorusskaia pis'mennost' /Belorussian Literature/, in Kiev in 1900 Osnovy Belorusskoi gosudarstvennosti / The Foundations of the Belorussian State/ in Wilno in 1919 (in Belorussian). This short list of a part of Professor Dovnar-Zapol'skii's many works indicates the direction taken by his scholarly activities after 1891. By 1926 he had already been deported from Belorussia, and by 1930-1931 even his name had been completely eliminated from Belorussian writing ...(1)

1. For information about Professor Dovnar-Zapol'skii note the article by one of his students, A. Sakovich, in Beda /Misery/ No.7(12), July, 1952, pages 193-206.

Professor Picheta, the (relatively, of course) elderly rector of the University of Belorussia, has very many historical works to his credit. While Rector of the University /27/ he wrote Istoria Belorussii /A History of Belorussia/, Part I, Minsk, 1924, and Voprosy vysshei shkoly v Belorussii v proshlom /Problems of Higher Education in Belorussia in the Past/, both in Belorussian. Professor Picheta was arrested in 1930. When he was released from exile, by a lucky chance, he further published Osnovnye momenty istoricheskogo razvitiia Zapadnoi Ukrainy i Zapadnoi Belorussii /Significant Moments in the Historical Development of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia/, Moscow, 1940, a book which, as one can boldly assert even without reading it, was written on order, expressly for the purpose of providing a theoretical basis for the Red Army's seizure of the western Ukraine and Belorussia. Nikolai Azbukin, a professor of geography at the University of Belorussia, was arrested and exiled to Nolinsk, (formerly) Vyatskaiya Guverniya, in 1930-1931. There is no further information about him . . . The academician, and philologist, Iazep Lesik, was arrested and banished in 1930-1931, and in 1936, while in prison during the Ezhovshchina, was tortured to death. Lesik in particular had to face all kinds of accusations after his arrest. The well-known brigade of the Department of Marxist-Leninism of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences, comprising the "scholars" L. Bobrovich, Shpilevskii, V. Bondarenko, S. Vol'fson, and Ia. Mats'iukevich, wrote, "After the Red Army had driven the Polish Whites and the other White bandits from the B. N. R. /Belorussian National Republic/, from the territory of what is now Belorussia, a part of the former ministers, including Ia. Lesik, remained in Minsk. With the aid of Balinskii /sic! Is that Balitskii?/ and Nekrashevich, those two toadies of the French general, Bartel', who had come to Minsk from Odessa, they began their activities. When, as a result of the victory of the working class under the guidance of the Communist Party, there arose the idea of organizing a research center in the B. S. S. R. (The Institute of Belorussian Culture), the Nats-Dems at once went to considerable trouble to take over that center and use if for anti-proletarian purposes. They began to group themselves around the People's Commissariat of Public Education so as to get down to 'business' immediately. Having joined forces under Ignatovskii's wing in Narkompros, on January 27, 1921, they heard an appropriate speech by Nekrashevich, the same Nekrashevich who, as late as January 13, 1919, wrote a letter to the French general, Bartel', asking his aid in the liberation of the Belorussian 'motherland' from the barbarian Bolsheviks."

(page 130) In another place the brigade writes, "Unfortunately the efforts of the Nats-Dems met with a significant amount of success. For example, Lesik and Lastovskii came quite close to liquidating 'tovarishch,' a word which is detested by reactionaries of all varieties. This word which is so saturated with revolutionary emotion was almost thrown out of the Belorussian language by the friendly efforts of the National-Democrats, and in full agreement with the Skarina tradition replaced by the patriarchally polite dziadz'ka (diadia /uncle/) . . . And responsible Soviet workers, frequently even Party men /28/ call each other dziadz'ka and tsetka (diadia and tetia /uncle and aunt/). Lesik in 1918-1920, conscious of his strength, ridiculed the word tovarishch in the White Guard newspapers, always putting it mockingly in quotation marks . . . When the Soviets came to power these people almost succeeded in driving the hated word out of use . . . " (Page 124).

The literary critic, Vladislav Charzhinskii (Derzhinskii), was arrested and exiled to Kazan'. His Vypiski iz Belorusskoi literatury XIX-XX Stoletii, /Selections from Belorussian Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries/ Minsk, 1926, had served as a basic text for teachers of Belorussian literature.

Another group arrested, included the young writers, poets, university lecturers, and school teachers who had already shown promise of great ability and who had been educated to the realities of Soviet life. The overwhelming majority of them were from the lower classes, mostly from the peasantry. It was a gifted generation stoic and staunch. Adam Babareko, a lecturer in philology and a talented literary critic, was arrested the first time in 1930, exiled in 1931, and died in prison in 1937. He was born a peasant. The young and gifted poet, Vladimir Dubovka, was arrested for the first time in 1930 and deported in 1931. In 1934 he was transferred in exile to Chuvashia, and in 1937 he disappeared in the torture chambers of Ezhovshchina. Another talented poet, Aleksandr Dudar, was first exiled in 1929 to the Smolensk Oblast', arrested again in 1937 and tortured to death. Vasilii Shashalevich, a playwright, was first arrested in 1930. In 1936 he was again arrested and sent to Kolyma where he died.

It is apparent from this short list that these people were active workers and essential elements in the national cultural rebirth -- the teachers and mentors of the young cadres of nationalists. They all had solid scholarly backgrounds.

661 Characteristic of the 1930 and 1931 arrests was that very few of the prisoners were punished by exile. In those times there were not yet enough concentration camps with the result that those deported were allowed to live at liberty in a restricted area. However, this sort of banishment was noted for its gentleness. In order to make supervision more convenient, the G. P. U. usually concentrated them in the sparsely settled northern provinces where it was impossible for them to find work to earn their daily bread. If one considers that the majority of those exiled /29/ were intellectuals, often elderly and unfit for physical labor, and that no one needed their literary skills, then it is apparent that their situation was very difficult. They did not all have relatives who could help them consistently. Times were very hard in the thirties, famine was in the country and the population lived at a very meager level of sustenance --therefore a significant part of those exiled were doomed to a slow death by starvation.

During 1930 and 1931 the uppermost group of workers in the Belorussian national movement was eliminated when the G. P. U. had completed its work, there remained the task of justifying this sharp and unexpected change of policy by means of propaganda. The prisoners had not been granted trials; people just disappeared, to turn up later in Siberia, on the Solovetskiye Islands, on the White Sea Canal construction, or in exile. There were persistent rumors that the prisoners had been accused of organizing and participating in the "Union for the Rebirth of Belorussia" /the S. V. B./ or the "Union for the Liberation of Belorussia" /the S. O. B./. At the time, the G. P. U. press usually printed slanted selections from "testimonies" which had been wrung from the prisoners by force. In the form of a secret brochure, as completely secret material, a pamphlet was passed around for the enlightenment of highly placed Communists. Without indicating how the prisoners' testimonies were procured, Party newspapers, periodicals, and special "exposures" quoted extracts from them. Then the secretary of the Party Central Committee or a member of the Central Committee Bureau was likely to make use of them somewhere at a meeting of the Party 'aktiv'.

"Cleansing" after Arrests -- Elimination of "Nats-Dems"

Official propaganda was faced with the task of portraying the Belorussian national movement as the work of Belorussian nationalists

meaning that it was synonomous with counter-revolutionary, wrecking activity and espionage -- aimed at tearing the B. S. S. R. away from the Soviet Union and creating a bourgeois national-democratic republic. Among those arrested were included the leading Belorussian intellectuals--the brains of the national movement, its theoreticians and those who put theory into practice . . . Social origin was of course taken into account, and every method was utilized to discredit the prisoners. The national movement was contemptuously christened the "Natsdemovshchina," and all who had either partaken in the national work or sympathized with it were called "Nats-Dems." The Soviet press and orators at official and unofficial meetings and gatherings elaborated on these epithets with all possible variations. /30/ It is characteristic that representatives of other nationalities such as the Lithuanian Ambrazhunas, who was a well-known Soviet worker, and the Jewish writer, Plavnik, who was famous under the pseudonym of Zmitrok Biadulia, were implicated in the Belorussian national movement. In its exposures the brigade of the Marxist-Leninist Department of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences wrote, "Nor did Z. Biadulia lag behind; on the pages of Belorusskaia Shliakha, under a pert pseudonym, he wrote, "Our language -- is a sainted martyr which has stood up under various tortures and hostile attacks and, even though it has not emerged victorious, has survived to the present day." (pages 100-101) In another exposure Ideolgiia i metodologiia natsdemokratizma/ The Ideology and Methodology of National Democracy/, the director of the philosophical institute of the Academy of Sciences, the academician S. Ia. Vol'fson, wrote, "The Nats-Dems were guided in all their activities by the 'golden rule' that without God you don't get anywhere. Therefore poets began their books with psalms saying 'My whole being strives toward God -- the living Lord.' (Biadulia) . . . The being of the Nats-Dems unceasingly 'strove toward God'" (pages 39-40). These thoughts of Z. Biadulia date from 1918, and Academician Vol'fson resurrected them in 1930. By the way, Biadulia was saved from arrest; he died in 1941 (1) and his work entered the anthology of Belorussian poetry

1. Z. Biadulia died while leaving Minsk during the German attack in 1941; as a Jew he could not remain, and no one was concerned with Jewish evacuation. He died during those nightmarish days, while escaping through his own efforts.

661 published by the Leningrad Publishing House in 1948. On the orders of Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Gei, "brigades" were formed in the Academy of Sciences, and they meticulously searched through publications, mimeographed speeches, and addresses for elements of National-Democracy. The prose and poetry, as well as newspaper articles, of writers and poets suspected of "Natsdemovshchina" were subjected to careful scrutiny and inspection. Besides those who were arrested, other, so-called "unexposed" National-Democrats, were smoked out. The attacks were transformed into persecution, and as a result of this badgering the famous Belorussian poet, Ianka Kupala, became desperate and attempted to kill himself after the manner of the Japanese samurais. School texts were leafed through carefully, and most of them withdrawn from circulation -- especially reading chrestomathies, grammars, and collections of dictations. Some were withdrawn automatically upon the arrest of the author and independent of their content, while others were banned as being considered inappropriate to the era of collectivization in agriculture and the Five-Year Plans. In the reading
626 chrestomathies examples of private farmers either in small villages
872 or isolated homesteads were not permitted. /31/ Nor were the arithmetical problems ever taken from the life of an independent farmer. The teachers themselves had to make up problems using the kolkhoz life or cooperative trade as a base. Moreover, only high quality produce or well-fattened stock could appear in the problems. Similarly, with regard to cooperative trade, only examples which affirmed its superiority over private trade could be employed. Some teachers, especially in the provinces, who were not sufficiently experienced in the subtleties of this Soviet policy were not only fired from their jobs but even arrested for using the following sort of example in a dictation. "Three lean kolkhoz cows were grazing in a meadow." All these switches and changes unquestionably had their impact upon the quality of work done in the schools, but educational leaders were held less responsible for the absence of textbooks than for using ones which were "ideologically inconsistent."

Theater repertoires were also subjected to severe inspection. 1
661 Everything even remotely reminiscent of Belorussian nationalism
536 disappeared from the stage, the artistic value of the play notwith-
626 standing. The First Belorussian Theater was forbidden to give Na Kupale, /On St. John's Eve/, a marvellous fairy-tale based on the national folk legend of the search for the "flower of luck" on the

1 [After 1930, cf. pp. 32-33, category 116-Anal(yst)]

661 night of St. John Kupala. The same happened to the historical
536 drama Kastus' Kalinovskii which portrays the heroic struggle of
626 the Belorussians in 1863 under Kastus' Kalinovskii's leadership. It was not saved by the circumstance that Kalinovskii was hung in Wilno by Murav'ev, the man who subdued the rebellion. 'Masheka', a play based on the legend of the founding of Mogilev, was also taken off the stage.

661 They even turned their attentions to the travel ing theater
545 which was under the direction of the national artist, Vladislav
626 Golubok. Instead of dramas based on the national life which could thus be understood by the broad masses of peasants and workers, the theater was reduced to giving strange and unintelligible translations. The travel ing company's repertoires was taken under strict surveillance as were those of the national music and singing ensembles. The director of the subdivision of Narkompros devoted to art, Il'ia Gurskii, displayed particular watchfulness in this respect. He could discover "Natsdemovshchina" not only in plays but even in the players' costumes. The artists of the Belorussian National Ensemble of music and song usually appeared on the stage in folk costumes: white trousers and folk blouses embroidered with Belorussian motifs. Gurskii ordered the white trousers to be replaced by black ones and the blouses by another kind which by its style was closer to a jacket, only without Belorussian ornamentation. The busts of the national poets, Ianka Kupala and Iakub Kolos, were removed from the pedestal of the First Belorussian Theater. /32/

523 A manifestation of chauvinism was uncovered even in the
626 Jewish national work. Jewish cultural workers, especially those
536 from other parties -- Social-Democrats (Mensheviks), former
661 Zionists, Bundists, Poal'-Zionists /?/-- were taken under strict supervision. In the Jewish theater the play, Girsh Lekert, was enjoying a great success. It portrays the revolutionary struggle of the Jewish workers in Wilno in 1902. In the course of the play the main character, a worker named Girsh Lekert, makes an attempt on the life of the Governor-General of Wilno, von Wal'. This is a historical fact. In addition to this play, the memory of Girsh Lekert had also been commemorated by placing suitable inscriptions upon the pedestal of a monument to Tsar Alexander II, the bust was broken off after the revolution. In the search for manifestations of national chauvinism it was decided that Girsh Lekert belonged to

* [official propaganda which portrayed the Belorussian national movement as counter-revolutionary, cf. pp. 32-33, category IIC - analyst]

563 the Bund Party, and from this the conclusion was drawn that the
636 Jewish chauvinists were idealizing a chauvinistic party and its
536 members. This was enough to have the play immediately removed
661 from the stage. It was also necessary to destroy the inscriptions on
665 the monument (1). The Bolsheviks cannot bear the popularity of any

1. The monument to Girsh Lekert was placed on the site of the one to Alexander II in Minsk in 1922 (cf. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia) /Little Soviet Encyclopedia/ Vol.IV, 1929 Edition, page 554, and also 1937 Edition, Vol. VI, page 139) and "liquidated" during the Ezhovshchina. Such was also the fate of one of the Minsk streets which in 1922 had been renamed Lekert Street and during the Ezhovshchina was re-renamed Voyoshilov Street.

other Party or its members, even though such popularity actually might be in accordance with historical reality. In this connection still another example is characteristic. The State Publishing House issued a series of biographies in the series called Zhizn' Zamechatel'nykh Liudei. /Lives of Outstanding People/. One of the books was about the life and activity of the famous volunteer Zheliabov. The book had been in circulation for quite a long time when criticism of it appeared in the Soviet press, as a result of which the book was withdrawn. The reason given was that the person of Zheliabov as a national worker was idealized -- this in spite of the fact that Lenin, even though not agreeing with the Narodnovolets tactics, called the movement a "heroic epoch". The real reason lies in the fact that Zheliabov admitted individual terror and advocated personal selflessness which are both very appealing to youth. /33/ The Bolshevik program repudiates individual terror, even though surreptitiously they practice it very widely. They are afraid to infect Soviet youth with the Narodnovolets' ideas about selflessness and thus turn it against themselves.

186 The Belorussians were always very proud of their great an-
661 cestor -- the scholar from Polotsk, a Doctor of Philosophy, and the first man in Belrussia to have a book published -- F. Skarina. In 1512, this great man received the degree of Doctor in medicine at the University of Padua. In one of the museum halls of the University there is even now a full-length portrait of Doctor Skarina among the other University celebrites. Until 1930 a lot of work and research

186 661 was being devoted to the life and work of Doctor Skarina. Portraits of him were printed in large quantities, and they decorated the halls of learned and cultural institutions, schools, museums, etc. There was a large plaster figure of him in the vestibule of the Institute of Belorussian Culture which in 1928 was transferred to the Academy of Sciences. After the proscription of National-Democracy the statue of the learned doctor of the sixteenth century was thrown out. Even the little statues of Skariny were destroyed, and a similar fate attended the portraits and statuettes of the other national hero, the leader of the Belorussian insurgents, K. Kalinovskii.

208 In order to compromise the National-Democrats and their activities completely the new director of Narkomprosz[1] of the B. S. S. R., I. Gurskii, was ordered to have a play written with the appropriate content. Gurskii decided that he would write it himself and thus make his career. Not gifted with a dramaturgic abilities, he did not write a play but a worthless burlesque on people who had already seen the inside of G. P. U. cellars. Making use of his official position Gurskii compelled the First Theater to accept this talentless work for production. Enormous material resources were used in staging it, to the great detriment of the other theaters . . . However, neither material expenditures nor the director's efforts could help the play in the slightest. Gurskii portrayed the National-Democrats as drunkards and depraved elements. The attempt of the universally respected and talented poet, Ia. Kupala, to take his own life was depicted as the foolhardy escapade of a drunkard. After two or three performances, Gurskii's play, as obviously worthless, forced, and spurious, was withdrawn without any particular fuss, criticism, contrite admissions, or confessions of error on the part of the author . . . So the atempt to use the stage for persecuting the National-Democrats was for the present not crowned with success. From Soviet newspapers it has been ascertained that I.Gurskii recently "responded" with two plays on post-war kolkhoz life: Khleb /Bread / Svoi Liudi /One's Own People/. They met the same fate as his "response" of twenty-two years ago. /34/ They were panned by the critics and did not even get to the stage.

661 Simultaneously with the arrest of the National-Democrats all of their writings were withdrawn from libraries, reading rooms, and general circulation, independently of whether or not they had any connection with the charges brought against the prisoners.

1 [People's commissariat of Public Education - Analyst]

661 Everything which had been created during long years of active research in history, ethnography, geography, literature, art, and regional studies; the productions of gifted poets both young and old; and the research work of specialists were all heaped together as harmful National-Democratic rubbish once their authors had been arrested. Every Soviet citizen, especially those who had any connection with a book, could consider himself a candidate for arrest. Every intellectual was particularly diligent to destroy in time any books, newspapers, photographs, or pictures of those who had been arrested in order to avoid extra unpleasantness in the case he might have the bad luck to be arrested himself. Usually arrest was accompanied by a thorough search with confiscation of all photographs, even of people long since dead or of those who had no connection with the arrested person; private correspondence was taken as well as books and documents of authors who had already been imprisoned. All this was later analyzed and sorted out by the G. P. U. in its search for accusatory material. In this fashion valuable books, photographs of friends and relatives possessing great sentimental value, and family correspondence perished and are perishing in flames. People preferred to burn everything suspicious so as not to give the G. P. U. investigators the opportunity to dig around in it with their filthy hands or to ridicule a person's most sacred feelings during cross-examination.

626 661 Here is a short list of those works destroyed which are of general significance: 1) anthologies of Belorussian national art, 2) dialectal dictionaries of the Cherven', Mozyr', and Vitebsk areas, 3) four-hundred year old Belorussian printed matter, 4) the Belorusskii Arkhiv (a periodical). 5) all anthologies of the poet, Ales' Garun (who died in emigration), 6) the publications of the first congress of Belorussian archeologists and archeographers, 7) the publications of the Department of Humanistic Sciences of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences (comprising philology, history, ethnography, archeology, art, law), 8) the series of editions of Belorussian scientific terms, 9) material for the study of Belorussian scientific terminology, 10) Belorussian folk-tales, proverbs, and sayings, written down and arranged by A. Serzhputovskii. This is only an insignificant part of the colossal vandalism.

Out of fear even Soviet books were no longer displayed or advertised in the bookstores . . . All the propaganda posters with Soviet decorations which had been hung in public places disappeared.

626 661 Some particularly timid institutional directors hastened to repaint their offices so as to cover the Belorussian ornamentation. /35/

It cannot be asserted that this "purge" of everything national in Belorussia, which so often led to absurdities, was carried out as a result of special directives. It was just that the new leaders, particularly those who were above suspicion with regard to the national work, hastened to insure themselves against any unexpected troubles.

626 217 There was total havoc in the Belorussian State Museum. Everything was radically rearranged, there were changes in the plans of the work, and all the museum's activity was subjected to merciless criticism. The brigade of the Department of Marxist-Leninism of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences, comprising L. Bobrovich, I. Shpilevskii, M. Grinblat, A. Levdanskii, in its "exposure" Etnografiia muzeinoe delo /Ethnography in the Museums/ wrote, "The National-Democrats chose ethnography as one of their basic objectives. Ethnography gives wide scope to the primary aims of the Nats-Dems . . . The ethnographic interest of the National-Democratic scholars was an adjunct to their politics." (page 151). The very purposes of museums were revised -- mass-cultural work among the broad masses of laborers was demanded from them, on socialist construction and class warfare. "First of all it is interesting to note how the Belorussian National-Democrats approach the role of a museum as such. The principle task of a museum is to collect, safeguard, and study objects of archeological, historical, ethnographic, and artistic interest which pertain to Belorussia (Kharlampovich-- Piatigodie Belorusskogo Gosudarstvennogo Muzeia /The Fifth Anniversary of the Belorussian State Museum"/ Nash Krai /Our Country/, No. 1, 1927, page 10). This is an old bourgeois proposition. Is a museum only a collection of interesting things? Is it only a curio cabinet? Is there not even any difference between a Soviet museum and the reactionary ones developed by students of local lore in the good old days?" (page 204), proclaimed the brigade of the Academy of Sciences. Museums were particularly blamed for not carrying on anti-religious activity but on the contrary collecting everything of value from the Catholic and Orthodox churches and the synogogues and preserving it lovingly. As a result of this reproof the museums changed completely. Everything reminiscent of the national essence of Belorussia vanished from the displays.

661 The Belorussian national movement was also charged with aiming to preserve religious feelings among the population and with

661 the desire to create its own Belorussian antonomous church. The national movement was also accused of wanting to preserve ancient church buildings, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish, at a time when their value as historical monuments was being denied. In this connection the remarks of the same investigating brigade of the Academy are characteristic: "One does not have to go far to discover the reasons for the attentive attitude toward the churches of the National-Democrat counter-revolutionaries, if the basic aims and intent of the latter are kept in mind. /36/ Belorussian National-Democrats -- the Nazalezhnik group -- who were dreaming of an independent national republic the whole time, never ceased in their efforts for an independent Belorussian autocephalous church. A bourgeois state cannot exist without a church. It is not accidental that the discussions about an autocephalous church which have been in vogue since the time of Nasha Niva /Our Cornfield/ have not stopped for a minute either among the Belorussian national-fascists on the other side of the border or among the counter-revolutionary National Democrats in the B. S. S. R. (page 226).

661 814 The well-organized movement for study of the region suffered particularly. Everything that had been accomplished through many long years was subjected to annihilating criticism, the movement now had to devote itself to promoting kolkhoz construction in the countryside; every effort at pure scholarship was declared counter-revolutionary and harmful to the country's socialist construction. R. Vydra in his exposure, Belorusskii natsdemokratizm v kraevodcheskom dvizhenii B. S. S. R., /Belorussian National-Democracy in the Regional Study Movement of the U. S. S. R./, writes this: "Belorussian Nats-Dems, who had almost completely taken over the regional studies movement in Soviet Belorussia, subordinated it to their own bourgeois-restorationist, counter-revolutionary, fascist aims, never hiding their historical connections with their own chauvinist-nationalists forebears of the Belorussian bourgeois camp. For this reason the historical essays on the study of Belorussia or the Belorussian countryside which appeared in Nash Krai /Our Country/ (1) are so very characteristic,

1. Nash Krai /Our Country/ -- the organ of the Central Bureau of Regional Study. The principal articles of the National-Democrats appeared mainly in this magazine.

661 814 even though they conceal the roots of their so opportune study of Belorussia. The articles by Vasilevskii and Kasperovich in Nash Krai, /Our Country/ the historical essay in Kasperovich's book, Kraevedenie, vystupleniia na I i II Vsebelorusskikh s'ezdakh kraevedeniia, /Regional Studies: Speeches Made During the First and Second Congresses of Belorussian Regional Experts/ all this material unanimously and openly, without any sense of shame, established a connection between the ideas and organization of modern National-Democracy in the B. S. S. R. regional studies movement and the Belorussian bourgeois-democratic movement in pre-Revolutionary times" (pages 244 - 245). Kasperovich, Shliubskii, and others, the spiritual leaders of the regional studies movement, were dismissed from their posts and deported in 1931. Regional studies in the B. S. S. R. was headed by a small-minded careerist, Serafimov, and national-chauvinism was discovered not only in the magazine, Nash Krai /Our Country/, but even in its name. So it was renamed Sovetskii Krai /The Soviet Country/ a title which is loose enough to encompass the whole Soviet Union.

New Personalities /37/

661 Who replaced the arrested leaders of the Belorussian national movement? In place of the imprisoned People's Commissar of Public Education of the B. S. S. R., Anton Balitskii, the former president of the Public Education Workers' Union, Anton Platun, was appointed. He had been director of the union for a very short period. Up until these new appointments he had been public prosecutor in Borisov for a while and then secretary of the Communist Party in the Slutsk district. In general he was considered only of average capacity. He had had neither training as a teacher nor even a secondary education, having progressed no further than one of the so-called higher grammar schools. In order to invest him with the authority befitting his appointment as People's Commissar of Public Education of the B. S. S. R. Platun was given the title of academician. He had no learned works to his credit, and the only lectures he had given were harangues at Party meetings. When the campaign for rooting out the "Natsdemovshchina" began, Platun took a rather active part in the unmasking of the nationalistic inclinations of the poets Ianka Kupala and Iakub Kolos. While in Narkompros he displayed no particular initiative and did not even

66/ disarrange the system established under Professor Ignatovskii although, of course, the arrests caused considerable alteration in the personnel of Narkompros. Under Platun there was a reform of the Belorussian institutions of higher education. The University and the Agricultural Academy were separated into two institutions. However this was not on Platun's initiative but the result of a directive from Moscow.

In the place of the deported Rector of the University, Professor Picheta, Ia. Korenevskii, a member of the collegium of Narkompros, was appointed. Ideologically he held views similar to those of the arrested Belorussians, and later on he also was fired and arrested.

As People's Commissar of Agriculture of the B. S. S. R. an employee of the agricultural cooperative, a man named Rechitskii, was appointed. Even though he was only semi-educated, he had had a little practical experience in Soviet work and was relatively reasonable and competent as far as peasant farming was concerned. In his practical work the People's Commissar of Agriculture /Narkomzem/ was completely immersed in promulgating the collectivization and fulfilling Party directives in regard to this question. He did not concern himself with exposing the activities of his businesslike predecessor and had no inclinations toward careerism. The working staff of this large commissariat was not totally obliterated, only a few of the leading workers, namely those who had been close assistants of Prishchepov, were arrested (including Smolich, and Godes who was the leading man on land reclamation, and Savich). Rechitskii was considered a climber from work on a lower level rather unfamiliar with the situation, and therefore less was demanded of him at first. /38/

The vacancy in the presidency of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences remained unfilled for a considerable time. There were no uncompromised persons who could have been selected for that eminent position. It was possible to turn people with elementary school education into academicians, but for the presidents some kind of "figure" was necessary. The Kremlin dispatched a certain Gorin to this post from Moscow. Although Belorussian by nationality and coming from western Belorussia, he would not speak the language and had changed his Belorussian name, Koliady, to the more euphonious Gorin. He considered his specialty to be history. Young, arrogant, and demanding, he regarded himself as an agent of Moscow whose

667 task was to annihilate the National-Democratic Academy and organize a genuinely Communist one, subordinated to the interests of socialist construction. He demanded that all organizations cooperate with and assist him, often with the totally unjustified hints that, to be sure, the National-Democratic Academy had been supported and helped by everyone and he, Gorin, was not sure that such assistance was being extended to him also. In order to make him an authority in Belorussia he was ordered to go to Warsaw to a congress of historians. At the congress he made a speech -- how successful it was is difficult to judge. But it became known that some Polish learned society had invited Gorin to deliver a lecture on some other historical subject and that he had declined the honor-- it must be supposed for the simple reason that Moscow was not certain of Gorin's competance to handle the job independently. In about 1932 he wrote some articles in the magazine Bolshevik /The Bolshevik/, engaging in a controversy with Iaroslavskii about some subject which I have forgotten. After two or three articles the Bolshevik announced that the controversy was being terminated. Iaroslavskii's stand was accepted, but nothing was said to Gorin about the fallacies of his convictions. The result of such a discussion as this, published in the Communist Party's theoretical journal, the Bolshevik, was again regarded in Minsk as an attempt to invest Gorin with learned stature. In practice, in his dealings with the Academy of Sciences Gorin gave no indication of being anything except perhaps a creator of investigating brigades among academic workers whose purpose was to smash the "Nats-Dem Academy". In about 1935, Surta, who had previously been People's Commissar of Health in the B. S. S. R., became president of the Academy. He was also sent from Moscow. Gorin's eventual /39/ fate is unknown (1)

1. It is possible that his fate was connected with that of his teacher, the famous historican Pokrovskii, whom Gorin never forgot to mention in any of his "works". As is common knowledge, Pokrovskii was subjected to severe criticism up until his death in 1932, after he was decisively unthroned in 1930. (cf. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia /Small Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1939 Edition, Volume VIII, pages 387-388).

661 Tomasz Dombalj, a Pole, was sent as the first vice-president of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences. He had visited Minsk for the first time in 1924 as a member of the Extraordinary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R., when the Vitebsk and Mogilev Guberniyas were being united to Belorussia. Dombalj had been the first Communist representative in the Polish Sejm. For his "Communist activities" he was deprived of congressional immunity, arrested, and sentenced to ten years in prison. Warsaw exchanged him for a Catholic bishop who had been arrested by Moscow. It was supposed that Dombalj would head the Peasant International (2); evidently he worked in the Comintern until 1931.

2. The Peasant International -- officially the International Peasant Council-- was founded in 1923, headed at first by A. P. Smirnov, and after him by I. A. Teodorovich (cf. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia /Small Soviet Encyclopedia/ 1929 Edition, Volume IV, page 329, and 1930 Edition, Volume V, page 89. In the Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia. /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/ 1937 Edition, Volume XXXV, page 17, at the word Krest. Intern. /Peasant International/ we find the reference, "Refer to Mezhdunarodnyi Krest'ianskii Soviet / International Peasant Council/, but in Volume XXXVIII, 1938 Edition, of the same encyclopedia, where all the words with the prefix 'mezhdunarodnyi' /international are found, there is no longer any Mezhdunarodnyi Krest'ianskii Sovet/ International Peasant Sovet/, from which the reference may be drawn that it foundered in the murky and troubled waters of the Ezhovshchina some time in 1937 or 1938.)

According to rumor he had been an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army during the first World War; there were also rumors that he had attended courses at several universities. Distinguished, always gay, vivacious and sociable, a lover of good company, he did not resemble a scholar at all. He himself insisted that he was working on a large scientific undertaking --a description of the rivers of Belorussia. In the generally guarded Soviet atmosphere, collecting material on rivers and compiling an index with information as to their depth, width, speed of flow, and banks made Dombalj's activity rather prone to suspicion. During the construction of the new Academy of

661 Sciences building, he ordered a small house to be built for him not far from the Academy /40/ and slightly set apart from the bustle of the city. The style of its architecture was western, but, what is worse, beside it there was built a pigeoncote. In a free society these "inclinations" would not have aroused the slightest suspicion. It appears that Dombalj was arrested during the Ezhovshchina and paid in full for everything. It is particularly mystifying to note that the trial was held in Warsaw. Another worker who was with Dombalj in the affair maintained that he conducted himself through out in a most revolutionary manner, organizing a hunger-strike while together with him in the same cell of the Warsaw jail. His learned study of Belorussian rivers was declared predestined for use by spies in the service of Poland, and the pigeoncote pronounced a post for carrier pigeons.

In connection with the destruction of the national movement changes were also instituted in the Soviet consulate in Warsaw. A. Ul'ianov, the son of a Minsk doctor, had been head of the Belorussian section of the consulate. His assistants were the Belorussians, Il'iuchenok and Brovkovich, who had been People's Commissar of Finances before being sent to the Warsaw consulate. At that time Ul'ianov had as yet not been subjected to any disciplinary measures, and later was appointed to the consulate in Latvia. Brovkovich was recalled from Warsaw, was director of the Belorussian State Publishing House for a very short time, was fired from this job, appointed director of a fishing concern sixty kilometers from Minsk, and then arrested. After his recall from Warsaw the consular employee Il'iuchenok was offered very second-rate work in the State Publishing House and was deported to the North in 1931. All traces of him have disappeared. In Minsk at the time there was a group of three persons which comprised the staff of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the U. S. S. R. in the B. S. S. R. The plenipotentiary's deputy, a young Communist and a graduate of the University of Belorussia, was also suspected of being a National-Democrat and arrested.

New Personalities in the Party /41/

665 In connection with the beginning of the destruction of the national movement there were even some changes in the

665 apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia. The chief of the culture and propaganda division, Dr. Senkevich, was recalled from his work to Moscow. A teacher by profession, he became implicated in revolutionary activities in 1950. When reprisals began he was forced to flee to the United States where he remained until the 1917 revolution. By the way, because of complicity in the same affair with Senkevich the prominent Belorussian Soviet writer, Iakub Kolos, was sentenced at the same time to three years confinement which he served in the jail in Minsk. In the United States Senkevich managed to graduate from a university and become a doctor of medicine. After the 1917 revolution he returned to Russia via Japan and there evidently joined the Communist Party. Then, since he was a Belorussian, he was sent to work there and appointed the chief of one of the Central Committee's subdivisions. Rather shy by nature and no longer young he shared the views of the nationalists concerning the cultural rebirth of the Belorussian nation, and while occupying the position of chief of one of the subdivisions of the Central Committee, Senkevich took steps to ensure that all the cultural measures were put into effect. Actually, all problems connected with the cultural degeneration of Belorussia passed across his desk to the Central Committee, and all decrees were formulated there as well. During the purge of the National-Democrats Dr. Senkevich was removed from his job and recalled to Moscow. What happened to him later is not known although evidently he died. A young Communist, Chernushevich, was appointed in his place; he had ascended the ladder of the Communist hierarchy rather rapidly, as late as 1925 he was no more than the chief of militia in some isolated district.

In those days the second secretary of the Party played a prominent role in the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party. In about 1928, the Belorussian, Vasilevich, occupied that position. Before becoming Second Secretary he had been People's Commissar of Finances in Belorussia. According to the established order the second secretary was the actual director of all organizational work, his primary task was to supervise the distribution of Party cadres throughout the Republic. In Belorussia the first secretary was always an envoy of the Kremlin; his duties consisted of making sure that directives from Moscow were fulfilled. In those times the appointment and transfer of Party cadres went according

65 to the following order. If a People's Commissar needed a responsible worker for work either in the Commissariat or in some district, he generally addressed himself to the second secretary of the Party Central Committee with the indicated nomination. Any problem arising in connection with the man's recall could be ironed out with the director of the institution where he was working, and usually with this the affair was terminated. In /42/ such cases the worker's appointment was effected by sending him a so-called "pass". If he was at a more responsible post his transfer or appointment had to be entered into the record of the Central Committee decrees. In all cases confirmation by the second secretary of the Party or an instruction from him was sufficient. If the People's Commissariat had to transfer its own man from one district to another or recall him to work in the Commissariat, the secretary of the district Party committee had to assent to it. In case the district refused to release the man, the second secretary again had the last word in the matter. Thus the second secretary disposed of the Party cadres, and this fact was highly significant with regard to the national work. Vasilevich was very closely allied with the leaders of the national movement in Belorussia and shared their views. All appointments passed through his hands as well as dismissals and in some cases the recall of Party workers, and this permitted him to operate with proven workers and to distribute them wherever necessary. The agenda of the Central Committe Bureau's sessions was always approved by him; he also outlined speeches beforehand and appointed the speakers. The activities of Secretary Vasilevich were much in evidence and could hardly escape the attention of the Kremlin, especially after the 1930 arrests. In the second half of 1930, he was recalled from Belorussia and sent to work as director of the land department in one of the Siberian oblast's. As a result, during the Ezhovshchina, Vasilevich was held accountable for everything that had happened in Belorussia and shared the fate of thousands of those arrested at the time. Less consequential functionaries of the Party Central Committee were also transferred to other jobs.

V. Sharangovich was sent out by Moscow in place of Vasilevich as Second Secretary. He was Belorussian by nationality and in the first years of Soviet power had worked in Belorussia as prosecutor for the People's Commissariat of Justice. It appears that he was a partisan during the Soviet-Polish War, was taken prisoner by the Poles, and exchanged for someone after the conclusion of peace. From his very first days as second secretary, Sharangovich quickly fell in line with the leading Belorussian Party workers. He was

665 unaffected and accessible. He took under his direct protection and guidance the young Communists who were just out of the Komsomol and resolutely promoted them to rather responsible positions, taking notice of their successes and helping them in their work. Most Belorussian Party workers considered Sharangovich as one of their own and trusted him.

The Estonian, Gei, was at that time the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. He had been sent /43/ out by the Kremlin around the end of 1929. Before his appointment nothing either good or bad was known of him, and it is possible that he was a lower level functionary somewhere in the R. S. F. S. R. In any case, his appointment to Belorussia was looked upon as a promotion since the region was regarded as a rather responsible field of Party activity. Its position on the border, the complicated state of its national affairs, and the policy which was being followed at the time within Belorussia, demanded that the Party secretary be adaptable, tactful, and careful in his work. Gei was not noted for his masterful organizational ability, and in his work as director of a republican Party he was not outstanding. He did not vaunt himself, nor induce others to do so. By nature he had no friends nor in fact any close relationships. Nothing was altered in the organization of work by Sharangovich's arrival. At that time everything was subordinated to accomplishing one task -- the speediest realization of the collectivization in Belorussia. Hundreds of workers were sent out in brigades throughout the regions and districts to give on the spot assistance. Telegrams with the sternest possible directives were dispatched from the center, setting all kinds of requirements and demanding reports. All efforts were aimed at declaring "total collectivization" in Belorussia -- about which a telegram could then be sent to the Kremlin. The kolkhozes were given various high-sounding titles. Here and there the first secretary of the Party was remembered and a kolkhoz named after him. The name Gei was also given to a rather large peat factory not far from Minsk.

During the Ezhovshchina Gei's name was removed from the kolkhozes and also from the peat factory. By this sign the Belorussians were able to guess that Gei had turned up in the camp of the"enemies of the motherland."

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665 There was a plan afoot, at first discussed very timidly and diffidently in a narrow circle of Belorussian workers, of maneuvering

557 to the point where the first secretary of the Party Central Committee would be a Belorussian. The idea began to catch on more and more obstinately after the arrival of Sharangovich in Minsk. It is conceivable that this aim was furthered by the opposition which developed for the succession to Lenin, and possibly the Belorussians chose this moment as the most appropriate. In any case, there was a tendency to support for the post of first secretary either V. Sharangovich or the president of the Sovnarkom /Council of People's Commissariats/ of the B. S. S. R., N. Goloded. Further blows were being dealt to Gei's already rather weak influence upon the course of events as well as his authority among the leaders. Sharangovich cooperated with him only formally, having gathered under his banner a group of Party secretaries from the local districts. Most of the People's Commissars supported the Sovnarkom President, N. Goloded, whose authority was unquestionable. Although not very highly educated, Goloded possessed great natural abilities and was a skillful leader. /44/ His protectors in Moscow were Molotov, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. Another prominent figure in Belorussia was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R., Al. Cherviakov. Gei was almost isolated, and in several cases Goloded simply ignored him. Gei's position was also insecure because he had spent the first years of his work in Belorussia at the time when the national policy was still being promulgated -- when Prishchepov was People's Commissar of Agriculture and had aimed at strengthening the private peasants. It goes without saying that the first signature on all the decisions and decrees of that period concerning cultural reconstruction and the land problem was that of Gei. The Kremlin demanded a more decisive struggle with the Natsdemovshchina and the Prishchepovschina. However, the laurels of "watchfulness" for uncovering "counter-revolution" in the national question belonged to the G. P. U.; it was only after the event that Gei, through the use of academic brigades, was able to provide a foundation for proving the national theories harmful and for justifying the correctness of the 1930 arrests. Gei was recalled from Belorussia in 1931, and some Belorussian leaders saw in this the promise of the speedy realization of their desires to see a Belorussian as first secretary.

665 After a short while the Kremlin sent the Ingush, N. Gikalo, in place of Gei to Belorussia as first secretary. The hopes of the

537 665 Belorussian leaders had not been justified. By sending Secretary Gikalo, the Kremlin made it very clear to the Belorussian Party leadership that it had no intention of indulging their desires and hopes of altering the established method of appointing the first secretary of the Party in Belorussia. Gikalo's further activities confirmed this in full. Evidently the Kremlin endowed him with wide and extraordinary powers and instructed him to put the Belorussian Party organization in order, forcing it to be subordinate to the one-man leadership of the first secretary. The Belorussians lost very much by this exchange of Gei for Gikalo. The Party summit had clearly miscalculated. Gikalo's subsequent work reduced their role to naught. He employed various methods for subjugating them. According to the etiquette previously in effect, it was considered inappropriate for even the first secretary of the Party to bring along his own collaborators. Gikalo disregarded this convention, and came to Minsk with a private secretary whom he introduced as his aide. Up until then such a position as aide had not even existed in Soviet or Party nomenclature. This one assumed an attitude of complete independence with regard to all Communists, including the leaders, and was very emphatic in insisting that all his orders be fulfilled as though they came from Gikalo himself. Gikalo not only did not oppose this state of affairs but even ordered compliance. /45/ He did not become intimate with anyone, and behaved quite independently. He devoted a lot of attention to the second secretary, Sharangovich. Gikalo knew that he enjoyed a certain amount of popularity and authority among Belorussians, and therefore he endeavored to bring him over to his own side and subordinate him to his influence. He accomplished it rather quickly. He began by issuing instructions that Sharangovich was to be credited with certain services which had previously never even been heard of. By means of propaganda Sharangovich was made the leader of the partisan movement in Belorussia during the Soviet-Polish War. Gikalo arranged to have certain obliging Communists found to organize the collection of signatures on petitions requesting that Sharangovich be decorated for his past services. As a result of this campaign, assisted by intercessions from "up above" in the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party, Sharangovich, twelve years after his "partisan exploits", was decorated by the Soviet government with the Order of the Red Banner, at that time the highest military decoration. Real partisans were secretly offended by this injustice

557 and felt that it was not much use performing services and deeds of
665 valor since what was really needed was sponsorship and protection. By this skillful maneuver Gikalo broke up the consolidation of the Belorussian Communist summit, and Sharangovich fell wholly under his influence.

The Communists who were grouped around Goloded, the President of the Sovnarkom, likewise decided to crown their protector with a decoration. In the first years of Soviet power Goloded had been president of the executive committee in the country town of Gori-Gorkiy. In those times partisans still operated in the Belorussian forests, and the Soviets were waging a savage war against them. Because of his public capacity Goloded also took some part in repressing the anti-Soviet partisans. Infected with the example of Sharangovich's decoration Goloded's supporters also began to collect signatures on petitions. Only a small rumor was collected because the sphere of his activity had been limited to one uezd, the "deeds" of Goloded had not had many witnesses, and careful people took a look around anyway, to see how Secretary Gikalo would react to this campaign. The question of decorating Goloded was brought up before the Bureau of the Party Central Committee, but there it was shelved and never put in motion. This was a bitter affront to Goloded, and bad feeling developed between him and Gikalo. However he nursed his malice and did not enter into an open conflict with Gikalo, considering that such a struggle would be dangerous to himself. /46/

From the very first days of his work Gikalo had tried to place his men in the most important sectors of the work. He sent to Moscow for one of his good friends, a certain Posse who graduated from the Institute of Red Professorship /Institut krasnoi professury/. Posse occupied several positions in cultural institutions. He was a lecturer in the Communist university, in the journalistic institute, and also worked in the Institute of Party History. Posse was quite a talented writer and frequently placed his articles in Party organs. He was very active in the uprooting of National-Democracy, and Gikalo used him to exert influence on the cultural front. New faces likewise appeared on the Central Committee staff, placed there by Gikalo. At first they always occupied very inconsequential positions, a certain Lentsner was very characteristic in this respect. Previously he had been Trotsky's private secretary, as people who

were interested in the matter explained it. Lentsner understood full well that having been an intimate of Trotsky would make it very difficult for him to carry on any widespread activities without considerable tenacity on his own part as well as extensive support and backing. Gikalo also took this into account. In addition, Lentsner's energetic nature strove after power, where Gikalo also supported him since he liked Lentsner's assertiveness and evidently had known him before. In order to provide Lentsner with lower-level Party work for a term where he might demonstrate his practical abilities, Gikalo appointed him secretary of the Sennenskii Rayon Party Committee. This rayon occupies a rather prominent place in Belorussia as it is very large and devoted primarily to flax growing. In fulfilling the plans for sowing, harvesting, and, most important of all, for government deliveries, the work of the rayon Party secretary is appreciated very highly. Lentsner appraised the situation correctly. By applying force and using highly repressive measures against the kolkhozes he managed to see that the kolkhozes of the Sennenskii rayon not only fulfilled the plan for linen deliveries of flax but even over-fulfilled it. The rayon participated in numerous other Soviet economic campaigns. After these "victories" Lentsner, in order to publicize his efforts, wrote a pamphlet with the title Iz otstaiushchikh v peredovye /From Lagards to Leaders/. Ostensibly the pamphlet praised the Party leadership, personified by Gikalo, through whose efforts the Sennenskii rayon took the lead in forced deliveries of flax. By means of percentages and figures the results of the efforts of former years were contrasted with the previous year when Lentsner had become Party Secretary. There were a lot of distortions and false comparisons in the pamphlet. In this way Lentsner presented Gikalo with a chance to emphasize his successful choice of Lentsner as rayon secretary, which had been fully justified by experience, and, what is more important, to propose after several months of local level work that the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party appoint Lentsner editor of the Party newspaper Zvezda /The Star/ /47/. Lentsner was recalled from the rayon and confirmed as editor; thus this important and influential position, one which Gikalo was particularly anxious to have occupied by his own man, was filled by a person who owed allegiance to him and was responsive to his instructions. In his new book Lentsner began to copy the methods of the infallible Moskovskaia Pravda /Moscow Pravda/ in full.

557 665 The moment was very appropriate. Stalin had settled accounts with the opposition and become the completely powerful leader. The theory and practice of leadership was picked up and quickly began to spread into the provinces. Even in the innermost rayons, the rural kolkhoz Party members shouted at meetings, "All hail to our leader so-and-so!" Any secretary of the local Party Committee could be considered such a leader. The "leader" accepted all this enthusiasm as his due. The leadership treatment and fawning before Gikalo were of course especially outrageous. Lentsner, as editor of Zvezda /The Star/, lauded Gikalo and spared no words or phrases. His portraits were published in large editions, and clubs, reading rooms, Party and Soviet institutions, schools, and empty shop windows were decorated with them in large quantities. Access to him became a great deal more difficult, and just to see him a special pass was necessary. He did not always receive even responsible Party functionaries. The following incident will attest just how cozy a nest had been feathered by means of 'kadership' and apple polishing. During a banquet, after a session of the Party plenum everyone was shouting, "All hail to our leader, Comrade Gikalo." However there was one member of the banquet who started to quarrel, evidently after considerable intake of alcohol, about the propriety of calling Gikalo a "leader". This incident was immediately brought to the attention of Secretary Sharangovich. The audacious individual was expelled from from the Party, but the affair stretched on for more than a year and finally came to the ears of Moscow. The guilty person was excused by the fact that of course there is only one leader -- Stalin, and although Gikalo is an excellent Party director still he is not a leader. The guilty man was reinstated in the Party, with a reprimand, however, for "quarreling without cause". At the time there were five Party secretaries in various fields of activity, all perpetually guarded by G. P. U. agents.

Purges 1933 and 1934

665 661 In 1933 there was a purge in the Party. Gikalo used it to get rid of certain elements which were troublesome to him and thus to strengthen his own position still further. To attain these ends he selected a commission with particular care. It was important to choose a president /48/ for the purge. In order to settle matters, once and for all with the national movement in Narkompros, the Academy of Sciences, the University, the State Publishing House,

665 the National Commissariat of Health /Narkomzdrava/, his wife,
661 Gikalo-Chizhova was appointed President of the purge in these institutions. She was reported to be a partisan from the Caucasus. When she first arrived in Belorussia she had occupied the post of director of the journalistic institute.

The purge was public; those involved had to recite their biographies and confess their sins. Entry was free to all, and not only was every accusatory speech permitted but even encouraged. There were cases of Communists, especially those who considered themselves old fighters with long records and who did not want to undergo these unpleasantnesses, turning in their Party cards themselves. At the opposite extreme, some farsighted people arranged to have their friends come to the meeting on the day of their particular purge and by their speeches attempt to portray them in the best possible light. Particular pressure was applied upon those who had been implicated in the national movement, Trotskyites, and those who had belonged to other parties. They were mercilessly expelled. Some time before the purge, various Party archives had been examined and G. P. U. reports which could serve as a basis for expulsion from the Party selected. In order to compromise directors of institutions who because of their good standing in the Party could not be summarily expelled, another method was employed. In such cases Gikalo usually issued a directive to expel without mercy all Communist fellow-workers of the one whom it was proposed to compromise. Having discredited the environment it was then easy to throw in the accusation that the director had been exposed to unhealthy influences. This is what was done to Sovnarkom President Goloded, the president of the Central Executive Committee, A. Cherniakov, and the People's Commissar of Public Health, Tsentsiper.

Arrests of Belorussian Nationalists - 1933

In 1933, there were some arrests of Belorussian intellectuals;
661 they were not exactly of a mass nature but were still significant. The victims in most cases were young Belorussians poets and writers, who were evidently regarded as a relapse from the mass arrests of 1930. This literary youth had given great promise and was burning with the desire to serve its nation. The second group of arrests was from among prominent Belorussian public figures, mainly those

661 who had formerly been deputies to the Polish Sejm. Almost all of them belonged to the Western Belorussian organization called "The Belorussian Workers' and Peasants' Union" /Belorusskaia Krest'ianskorabochaia Gromada /. In fact they were the leaders of this organization and its membership ran into the thousands. In 1905 the Belorussian delegates had been deprived of congressional immunity and arrested. In 1927 /49/ they were sentenced by the Polish judiciary to varying periods of imprisonment, but by an agreement with the Soviet Union they were handed over to the B. S. S. R. . Here they were received with great pomp, meetings, orchestras, and newspaper accounts of their activities. Most of them received responsible posts. However, no confidence was manifested in them. They were not permitted to do their work independently, being generally appointed as deputies -- in Narkompros, the State Planning Commission, museums, the Academy of Sciences, etc. The first period of meetings and joyful hopes passed and was replaced by stern Soviet reality which the delegates had not even thought about. They lacked all the necessities of life, not to mention such customary comforts as sufficient furniture and roomy apartments. They confided their feelings to one another guardedly but mentioned their dissatisfaction even to the native Soviet population. Of course all this was taken in and recounted to the G. P. U. One further circumstance made them uneasy. The most influential of their number, Professor Bronislav Tarashkevich, for some reason or other never got to Minsk, and it was rumored that he had gone from Poland directly to Moscow. A Polish court had sentenced Professor Tarashkevich to thirteen years imprisonment. He was a prominent and renowned philologist, and while in the Polish jail had been elected a member of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences. In vain he was awaited in Minsk; he was not permitted to go there.

In Minsk in 1933 all the former Polish delegates were arrested, and likewise those Belorussians who had been condemmed by Polish courts for belonging to the Belorussian Gromada and deported to the B. S. S. R. Thus in one night a lot of credulous enthusiasts were liquidated. Certain dark rumors were current to the effect that the Polish Defensiva had rid itself of the leaders of the Belorussian masses in Western Belorussia while in the B. S. S. R. the G. P. U. was trying to liquidate the same top echelon of the western Belorussian national movement. In his memoires, one inmate of Solovki

661 describes his meeting with the Belorussian delegates and other imprisoned Belorussians. They mentioned to him that they had spent about a year in prison in Minsk. In these memoires of the concentration camp on Solovki, a book entitled Nedostreliannye, / The Unexecuted - - literally means "The Not Completely Executed" - - Translator / on page three, Pidgainyi writes, These former sovereigns who had become the most obediant slaves, arrived at Solovki " in miserable and pitiable circumstances. " The best and bravest of all was Rak-Mikhailovskii. I know nothing about either his past or his activities in Soviet Belorussia. I can only assert one thing, that this person sincerely and without regret actually said, "We had it coming. " I had the opportunity to converse with Rak-Mikhailovskii several times, and received a most excellent impression ... /50/ He decisively and categorically condemned everything in which he had so blindly believed and blamed himself for what happened. At Solovki he worked at heavy physical labor, always and everywhere reiterating his hatred for Bolshevism and for Moscow, until at last in 1936 he was put in one of the isolation cells on Solovki. Metla on the other hand, who was tall and slender with blue-grey eyes, was a lyrically tender and quiet person. He was sick with tuberculosis, and coughed, but did work which was far beyond his physical strength. Already on Morsplav (sic), while he was planing beams in a woodworking shop, he threw down the plane and said, 'No, I just can't take it. If only the norms were lower!' -- and could never fulfill them. On Solovki he had to dig ditches in some land-improvement project and finally landed in the hospital out of which they carried his corpse secretly. No one found out where Metla was buried. I received this sad news in the spring of 1936. " The Ukrainian, Pidgainyi, had the same sad but warm memories of the delegates, Dr. Dvorchanin and Gavrilik, whom he also met on Solovki.

These Belorussian figures were liquidated by People's Commissar of the N. K. V. D. . Zakovskii, a man noted for his cruelty, who had come to Belorussia from Siberia with a whole staff of trusties. After the murder of Kirov in Leningrad, Zakovskii was made the Leningrad Commissioner in place of Medved' who was given a ten-year sentence. When Ezhov's came to power in the N. K. V. D., Zakovskii was appointed his deputy and subsequently shared the fate of his chief.

665 A new Party purge took place after the killing of Kirov; it
661 went under the innocent designation of a "certification of Party documents." This purge was not public and had as its slogan -- "Let's put Party affairs in order." Externally it looked as though the Party records and documents were being checked and collated. Accuracy was required in all files. However, in actuality, this was the most terrible purge of all. All Communists who had ever been penalized, those excluded from the Party in the past, ones suspected of nationalistic inclinations, Trotskyism, and those who had come from other parties, all those were under suspicion and had their Party cards taken away. Lists were drawn up of the ones selected, and their expulsion from the Party was legalized by a Central Committee decree. This work was handled by the so-called Commissioner of Party Control, who had taken the place of the Central Control Commission. In some institutions as many as fifty percent were ousted; everything was done behind the scenes, and it was rare that anyone appealed. However, in some isolated cases Gikalo called in the expellees for examination. In Minsk Professor Kaminskii, a man of seventy-five and a specialist on eye diseases, was expelled after an examination of his Party record /51/ on the grounds that before joining the Party he had been in the Bund and in the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. To Gikalo's question as to why he had changed from one party to another he cleverly remarked that all his life he had been seeking the best party and at last had found it ...

Eventually, of course, some of those expelled were reinstated by Moscow, but this took years. In Pravda there appeared articles about excessive zeal, a too formalistic attitude and too little sensitivity, which stated that some honorable people had been expelled.

557 After the check-up of Party documents several commissars
665 were recalled from Belorussia, even though they had not been expelled from the Party and had not suffered any Party penalities. The reasons were deep and secret. Those recalled from Belorussia were Belorussian by nationality. In the past they had not been mixed up in active national work, having on the contrary replaced the commissars who were fired and arrested in 1930. However, during their work they had not practiced indiscriminate defamation of everything national in Belorussia and in many cases quietly encouraged various manifestations of the national work. They had been embittered by the dictatorial tactics of Secretary Gikalo, and there were other motives as well. These commissars had joined forces around Sovnarkom president Goloded, Gikalo's strong and stubborn opponent. They never ceased to regard him as a possible candidate for the post of first party

557 secretary in Belorussia once Sharangovich, after getting his de-
665 coration, went over to Gikalo's side. Goloded was a good business man and not a worker in the national movement. While president of the Sovnarkom, in 1928, he carefully studied the economy of the region, aimed to develop industry in the Republic, and supported Belorussian cultural institutions and theaters. Gikalo discerned in Goloded a powerful and influential competitor. However, by his clever tactics during the Party purges Gikalo managed to cut him off from most of his support. Platun was recalled from Narkompros and sent out to Siberia as the boss of the political section of Sovkhoz. D. Chernushevich, the former director of the Cultural and Propaganda Section of the Central Committee, was appointed in his place. People's Commissar of Agriculture Rechitskii was recalled and sent to the Privolzhskaia oblast' to manage transportation. In his place, Goloded's deputy, the Pole Genek, was appointed. The President of the Higher Council of the National Ecomomy /Vysshii Soviet Narodnogo Khoziaistva/ (as the system of industrial administration was called before the organization of special commissariats) Grisevich was appointed director of the political section of some railroad in Siberia. People's Commissar of Health Tsentsiper, a friend of Goloded, was also recalled. A certain Surta was sent out from Moscow to replace him. /52/ All these had been old Belorussian figures. On the eve of the Ezhovshchina they were temporarily faced with honorable exile.

Party Personnel Shifts 1934-1936

In about 1934 the second secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, Sharangovich, was recalled. His transfer out of Belorussia was evidently the work of first secretary Gikalo. Sharangovich, as has already been indicated, enjoyed some authority among Belorussian workers in the first period of his work. He was considered one of them, and he was also closer to them and more accessible than the Ingush, Gikalo, all the more so since he did not display that particular dislike for the Belorussian movement which Gikalo manifested in his work. (1) Upon Sharangovich's

1. It should be noted even so that in spite of all his "particular dislike for the Belorussian national movement"

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Gikalo shielded Belorussian literature and art, in fact patronized it, similar to one of his followers - Ponomarenko about whom more later.

arrival for work in Belorussia Gikalo, aiming to divide the unity of the Belorussian Communist leaders, tried to attract him to his side, and in this he succeeded almost completely. But in the course of time Sharangovich became superfluous, for Gikalo and for Belorussia. His recall coincided with the reorganization of the Central Party Commission and the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, the so-called Ts. K. K. -R. K. I., which were separated into two independent institutions. Sharangovich was appointed commissioner of party control in Kazakhstan. As secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party his scope of activity had been broader and more varied since every day he had to mix with a number of leading workers and was approached for directives on all problems of Party and Soviet construction. The commissioner of party control worked in a limited field, his job consisting mainly of analyzing all possible infractions of Party ethics and expulsions from the Party, examination of appeals from expulsion, and the imposition of Party penalties. Generally old Party members were appointed to this post, ones who were no longer capable of broad practical activity in other phases of work. On one hand Sharangovich's amour propre was flattered at being appointed as an organ of Party control, at being entrusted by the Kremlin with control functions over the Party in Kazakhstan, but simultaneously he was removed from the political scene, and this did not suit his restless nature.

On Sharangovich's recommendation, the Belorussian, Volkovich, was appointed second secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Until his appointment Volkovich had been the president of the Bobruysk executive committee and was not widely known. At his new and prominent post he made no impression at all, being sick frequently while Sharangovich was secretary. Belorussian workers had generally come to him to have questions decided, but after his departure not many came to Volkovich, knowing his weak orientation in questions of Soviet and Party construction. All efforts were made to gain admittance to Gikalo himself as he was now the only real Party functionary left in Belorussia. To tell the truth there were still three secretaries left in the Party Central Committee, but they played no conspicuous role since they were occupied with specialized phases of

537 665 activity. Such a one, for example, was the Special Secretary for Transport, Ivanov. He did not concern himself with general Party direction. Thus Gikalo's only opposition was the president of the Sovnarkom, Goloded. Their mutual relations were deteriorating rapidly.

The tense situation in the country at that time became abruptly worse. In Moscow, efforts to annihilate and liquidate the members of the opposition were being intensified. There was a significant shake up of Party leaders in command of military districts throughout the Soviet Union. Heightened "awareness" was being demanded of everyone. Any sort of exposure was encouraged. . . The following incident was typical of Belorussian conditions. Trotsky's former secretary -- a certain Lentsner -- mentioned on page 46, was editor of the Party newspaper, Zvezda. He was a very adroit fellow, and Secretary Gikalo was particularly sympathetic toward him. When the unmasking campaign had reached a rather intense pitch, Gikalo made haste to spirit his favorite out of Belorussia into the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast', doing this without any publicity or the usual Party formalities. Having made arrangements with the secretary of Dnepropetrovsk oblast', a man named Kataevich who was widely known throughout the Soviet Union, Gikalo dispatched Lentsner to him without a decree from the Bureau of the Party Central Committee. There he was given the post of director of the Oblast' Agricultural department. Goloded, being a member of the Party Central Committee, took advantage of this. At a session of the Bureau he demanded to have explained upon what foundation a worker of top Party standing, the editor of the Party newspaper, and appointed to this post by a plenum of the Party Central Committee, /54/ was sent out of Belorussia without the Bureau's sanction. Gikalo was placed in an extremely sensitive position, the more so since Lentsner had such a heavy black mark against him, as friendship with Trotsky was considered to be. In the minutes of the Central Committee Bureau's session Goloded entered his own particular opinion concerning Secretary Gikalo's incorrect activities as manifested in his granting leave to Lentsner and the event became known in the Kremlin since all minutes were sent to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in Moscow.

It seems that Secretary Gikalo was recalled from Belorussia in the first part of 1936. He received a post in the Kharkov Oblast' as second secretary of the Party. It was evident to all that he had

537 been demoted . . . Sovnarkom President Goloded had become
665 temporarily unassailable, and in Moscow he was above any sort of suspicion. As for Gikalo, to be changed from party director of a republic to second secretary of an oblast', even one with heavy industry, was considered a step down.

After an absence of more than a year in Kazakhstan, V. Sharangovich was sent by the Kremlin as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. It looked as if the Belorussian Communists had attained their heart's desire -- as first secretary they got a Belorussian who for the third time was returning to work in Belorussia. The ensuing year brought with it many griveous changes.

Yezhovshchina - 1937

/this spelling occurs in the original, otherwise
643 the transliteration used is "Ezhovshchina." Translator/

661 In the middle of 1937, the president of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R., Aleksandr Grigor'evich Cherviakov, committed suicide. A Belorussian by nationality and born in the village of Dukorka thirty-five kilometers from Minsk, he was a teacher by specialty, having graduated from the normal school in Wilno. In the First World War Cherviakov was an officer. The February Revolution found him in Petrograd where he subsequently organized the Belorussian soldiers of the Petrograd garrison. After the Bolshevik seizure of power Cherviakov entered the Communist Party. When on February 27, 1919 the so-called Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic was organized on the territory of Lithuania and Belorussia, Cherviakov became Deputy Commissar of Public Education (1). From the day of /55/ the second announce-

1. Immediately before this Cherviakov was Commissar of Public Education in the first government of the B. S. S. R. (cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsikopedia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1934 Edition, Vol. LXI, page 195/ (sic).

ment of the Belorussian S. S. R. up to his death Cherviakov was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee and then of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. . He was not noted for his revolutionary activities. It is possible that in the

643 first years after the revolution Cherviakov was attracted by the
661 idea of a national rebirth in Belorussia, and, like many other Belorussian intellectu al, he hoped for a regeneration of the Soviet system and the creation of a Belorussian democratic republic. It was rumored that Cherviakov, during the Belorussian national movement of the NEP years, belonged to an underground organization of Belorussian nationalists (1). He understood the psychology of

1. These rumors, more probably, were disseminated by the G. P. U. and are scarcely consonant with reality.

the national masses perfectly, especially that of the peasantry, and was a good speaker. In the first years of the Soviet regime, when possibilities were more numerous, Cherviakov did a lot of work. Of course he could not proclaim his own Belorussial laws, but anyone who was offended, hampered by his limited rights, or sentenced to a long term in prison or even death, found a possible source of assistance in the person of Cherviakov, that is, if assistance was still possible in any way at all. The peasantry, in particular, came streaming into his anteroom. His popularity was extraordinary. His official position permitted him frequent trips to the cities, towns, and villages of Belorussia. Not following the example of other Soviet leaders, he always tried to be with the masses, to see everything with his own eyes, to talk with the peasantry and the workers. Already as early as the thirties, every Soviet person, eminent ones in particular, had to be especially restrained, circumspect, and careful, not only in his actions, but in words, meetings with others, and conversations. As far back as the time of NEP, Cherviakov, while speaking at a meeting on a visit to Moscow, had been careless enough to repeat Bukharin's slogan, "Get Rich!" Subsequently this carelessness caused Cherviakov a lot of difficulties. Every climber and careerist, during the collectivization and afterwards, took every opportunity, whether or not it had any relation to the business at hand, to remind Cherviakov of this "cardinal sin." Bukharin was accused by using this slogan, of inciting to individual rather than to the collective prosperity which was to be realized through the kolkhoz and nationalized state industry. Cherviakov's enemies were always trying to pin a right deviation on him. However, /56/ none of the attempts to overthrow Cherviakov, especially those made by

643 Secretary Gikalo, met with success. The Kremlin directed that
661 he should remain as President of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. In his personal life he was very unassuming and not fond of any sort of pomp and circumstance. During a Party plenum in the conference room of the government building Cherviakov left the meeting, went into his office, locked the door, and shot himseld in the heart - with a revolver. When the door was forced open he was already dead. On the day after his suicide this little notice in small type appeared on the last pages of the Minsk newspapers: "Yesterday, due to family misunderstandings, A. Cherviakov, the President of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R., shot himself." His corpse was displayed in the club of the labor union of soviet and commercial employees. On the day of the funeral a simple, rough, wooden, not even painted coffin was set on the platform of a truck, without any wreaths or the funeral ribbons with inscriptions which are usual in such cases and born off to the tomb without any funeral music. Nonetheless Cherviakov's funeral turned into a large, crowded, but silent demonstration of the population of Minsk. An enormous crowd accompanied the coffin; policemen on foot and horseback drove away the multitudes of people and ordered them to disperse, saying, "Well, you've seen the funeral, now move on." During the funeral procession, because of the massive gatherings of people, every sort of movement through the streets came to a halt. During the funeral itself there were no speeches or memorials. He was buried but not forgotten. For more than a year Cherviakov's tomb was always decorated with newly-cut flowers which his friends and well-wishers brought. His wife and two foster-daughters left Minsk after the funeral and were arrested later on. After his death Cherviakov left the most happy memories among Belorussians.

Osip Stakun was appointed president of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. in his place. He appeared in Belorussia in about 1934 or 1935. We have no information where and in what capacity he had previously worked. It is known that Stakun had long been a member of the Communist Party, which he had joined even before the February Revolution, while a foreman in the Putilov Works in Leningrad. By his habits and bearing Stakun reminded one of the old Party intellectual-idealists, who payed little attention to their personal lives. He was pleasant with others and displayed no sharpness on the job. Coming from the Wilno province and

643 Belorussian by nationality he showed no interest in the Belorussian national work, even though at the time it was very muffled and suppressed. Upon his appointment as president of the Supreme Soviet the general opinion was /57/ that he would, to some extent, take the place of the intelligent and sensitive Cherviakov. However Staken lasted no longer than three or four months as president, after which he was arrested. His fate is unknown. Then a certain Natalevich was appointed president. No one at all knew him; there were rumors that he had been a captain in the Red Army, but he certainly was never a member of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R.. Nothing was known of his past. He lasted until the war, and apparently even during the war was still considered president since he remained at the post afterwards. What has happened to him recently is matter for conjecture since now there is another president of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R.

645 661 After Cherviakov's suicide the next prominent victim of the Ezhovshchina was the president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R., Nikolai Goloded. He was not arrested when the secretary of the Party Central Committee announced to him that he was being recalled from his post. In his place another secretary was recommended, a certain Volkovich. Goloded was arrested either in Moscow or along the way. It became known subsequently that during the examination by the N. K. V. D. he threw himself from the fifth floor and killed himself. There are grounds for supposing that the N. K. V. D. purposely made his death look like suicide. We have already spoken about his career several times (cf. pages 43, 45, 51). He was president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R. for almost ten years, taking the place of Adamovich who was recalled from Belorussia and shot himself during the Ezhovshchina. Goloded had an excellent memory as well as great ability as a director and administrator. He had barely finished the first three classes of the workers' school of the Agricultural Academy. However his natural abilities made it possible for him to cope with his responsible Soviet post. On the job he was secretive and conceited, and was able to bring others under his influence. He was not on familiar terms with anyone, and was always reserved. In Moscow he was able and skillful at promoting the cause of the Belorussian economy. He was on good terms with Molotov, Mikoian, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. However, all this did not save him from death.

665 Even Party Secretary Sharangovich's turn came up at last. After a short time as first secretary of the Party he was arrested. 661 His fate is known from the Moscow newspapers. Sharangovich was tried along with the group headed by Bukharin. The trial was public, and portions of it were printed in the papers. It seems that all the defendents were sentenced to death, including Sharangovich. The impression he made was that of a sincere and hearty man. As was previously noted he had gained /58/ the confidence of many Belorussian Communists, especially young ones. However, in the light of subsequent events his activities in Belorussia give indications of secretiveness and lack of sincerity toward those who trusted him. No Belorussian got decorated for partisan activities during the Soviet-Polish War, yet Sharangovich was decorated ten years later. And in any case nothing had been heard of his guerilla activity at the time. It is common knowledge that there was no unified command over the partisans in 1919 and 1920, and if Sharangovich was made the leader of the partisan movement, the actual participants themselves only learned about it afterwards. His change in allegiance after he received the decoration and became Gikalo's obedient tool left a bad taste in the mouths of many Communists. His term as first secretary was marked by the deaths of president of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. A. Cherviakov, and of president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R. N. Goloded. Even if Sharangovich was not primarily responsible for their deaths, nonetheless he was very close to the whole affair. In the last stage of his life, at the trial of the Bukharin group, after Bukharin had testified, Sharangovich made some remark as this: "Bukharin, why tell lies here in court?" Even in a Soviet court Sharangovich tried to gain some advantage for himself.

665 Instead of the defunct Sharangovich the Kremlin sent one Volkov as Belorussian first secretary. All of his "activity" took place at the height of the Ezhovshchina. Volkov did not concern himself with leadership but was mainly an adjunct of the N. K. V. D., and "honorary" office which he filled with particular pleasure and satisfaction. A lot has been said and written about the N. K. V. D. 's activities during that period.

665 By nature Volkov, the new secretary of the Party Central 661 Committee, was a crude despot with the manners such as chekists had during the first years of the Soviet system. Uncultured and

665 unbridled in his expressions, he produced a repellent impression.
661 He spent his time making speeches at various meetings during which he fumed against "the enemies of the people." Right and left he ascribed various kinds of crimes, particularly espionage and wrecking, to various victims. After such a characterization the agents of the N. K. V. D. had nothing left to do except collect the victims and cart them off to the cellars. It is appropriate to hear the story of a certain Prokopchuk who was a professor of dermatology. At a meeting of workers in medicine Volkov made a speech accusing the professor of having spread veneral diseases among his patients for the purpose of sabotage. By the way, from the Soviet point of view, Professor Prokopchuk's political reliability was suspect least of all. /59/ In the past he had been a partisan in the Soviet-Polish War; after graduating from a medical institute he applied to become a specialist, and as a reliable man and a Communist he was ordered to Paris to perfect himself in his specialty. After this accusation Volkov did not allow Prokopchuk the chance to speak in his own defense.

Volkov sent his henchmen into the country districts, and they operated in exactly the same fashion. These envoys of Volkov, so-called Central Committee instructors, upon arrival in some particular rayon, would convoke a Party meeting and right there, having accused the contemplated victim of espionage and sabotage, would take away his Party card. The N. K. V. D. would then finish the job. One particular instance of this sort became widely known. About six kilometers from Minsk there is a rayon center, the town Cherven' (formerly Igumen). A certain Plentnev was Party secretary in this rayon -- an average director and not outstanding at all. Formerly he had been the village schoolmaster. At a Party meeting, Volkovs' deputy took his Party card away and accused him of espionage. Able to foresee the course events would take, Pletnev, who was sick and very nervous and did not want to have to wait for these unpleasant developments, decided to commit suicide. He shot himself in the temble, but did not succeed to kill himself. The severely wounded Pletnev was arrested by the N. K. V. D. and put in the prisoners' ward of a hospital. He lived, but the shot had severed his ocular nerve, and he was left blind in both eyes. After a lengthy arrest he was set free. The Ezhovshchina passed; here and there, timidly and without any special publicity, new "enemies

of the people" were beginning to be uncovered--those who had been arrested inhumanly and using such refined forms or derision in carrying on the investigations into non-existant crimes. The Central Committee instructor who had been directly responsible for Pletnev's blindness was remembered, and a public trial was organized in Minsk as a warning example. By the magnitude of the offense and the way events were developing, most people thought that the accused would be threatened with the death penalty. However he got off with five years imprisonment. One wonders if he survived his sentence in the concentration camps.

As a display some saboteurs were tried publicly in Gomel' during the Ezhovshchina. Those implicated were the president of the Gomel' City Soviet (his name escapes me), the director of the City Health Department -- a certain Gurlo, and the head of the repair shops for tractors and farm machinery whose name was Valiukevich. All three were Communists. They were accused of unbelievable crimes, and they admitted them not only in the N. K. V. D. cellars but also in court -- something which made a very deep impression upon the masses of workers present at the trial. By the way, before the revolution Gurlo had /60/ worked at the very insignificant job of town postman; he attached himself to the Bolsheviks in the very first days of their power, and later, after a number of years, became director in the large telegraph and post offices. Gurlo, like the other two who were accused was absolutely not inclined to become a wrecker. However, he "admitted" that through a group of agents he had infected small children with syphilis while they were still in the nursing homes. All three were condemned to be shot. Gurlo's agents, of course, perished at the same time before the eyes of the public, without a trial. Tall N. K. V. D. operatives took them in custody and carried them away in the "black raven." Then there were persistent and highly probable rumors to the effect that they had been promised life and liberty for "confessing."

There was another case. A forty-year-old woman named Novikov was arrested in Gomel'. She was a Party member, half-educated, whose work was organizing women on the kolkozes. She was confronted with a charge of spying for Germany, based on the fact that during the first World War she had earned her bread by washing the German soldiers' laundry. The charge was

665 absurd, and the victim would not confess to the investigator. So he began to try to assure her that her "confession" was needed by the 661 Party. In her simplicity Novikov stated quite reasonably that he, the investigator, was also a member of the Party and if the Party needed someone to admit to a charge of espionage, here he was presented with the opportunity. By a lucky chance Novikov succeeded in being released; a good friend of hers who was acquainted with an influential N,K.V.D. agent helped her. Novikov herself used to tell about this.

They arrested one member of the Komsomol. He was assigned the role of having spied for Italy. Knowing himself to be absolutely innocent, he stubbornly refused to confess. The investigator beat him terribly, put him in a cell, put him on the assembly line -- the fellow was unable to stand up under these methods and was ready to confess. The other prisoners in the cell took pity on the innocent youth, but of course they were unable to assist him. The Komsomel member, by the way, was a student in a school of design. There was one sharp-witted person in the cell, and he taught the Komsomol member how to "confess." At the regular examination he confessed that his contacts during his espionage activities had been the Italians Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and others. The investigator was overjoyed by the admission, having gotten what he wanted and complied with the wishes of his "superior." He fed the Komsomol member, gave him some makhorka, and sent him back to the cell. There he sat for about two more weeks, thanking his preceptor for the successful method of confession. /61/ He was called in again for examination. The elder investigator swore at him for turning the investigation into a farce, but the young man explained that his teachers had certainly been famous Italians. The ignoramus investigator had not had a notion who these world-renowned men were and believed that Raphael was an organizer of spy rings.

626 During the Ezhovshchina the Belorussian Communist press played an especially repulsive role. The so-called newspaper 661 correspondents scoured the various Soviet agencies and institutions for accusatory material. In this work assistance was given by the directors of the secret departments of commissariats and other important establishments. These departments were called "special sections," and in most cases were under the supervision of the secretaries of the Communist cells. When some sort of evidence, no matter

6.16 6.17 low flimsy, had been collected, the newspaper, and particularly the Communist Party organ, Zyezda would concoct an accusatory article in which no colors were spared in inventing ways to vilify the appointed victim. The facts were distorted and in most cases hollow, false, and obviously invented. At best anything positive was passed over in silence or it was presented as counter-revolutionary activity, as the intrigues of enemies of the people... After such a preparation the victim would disappear on the same day into the cellars of the N. K V. V. The existing prisons were not sufficient to hold all the prisoners, and old cellars and half-ruined storehouses had to be used; in Minsk, for example, a former monastery was adapted to serve this need. Arrests were made not only by the N. K. V. D., but also by the organs of the Soviet militia, under the pretence that it was for statutory offenses, and afterwards they were handed over according to special categories.

6.11 Citizen S. was arrested just because of this sort of accusatory and lying newspaper article in Zyezda. The police arrested him on some made-up statutory offense. While he was in police custody his wife with great difficulty succeeded in getting a chance to see him during his walk. He had not been accused of anything and had not even been examined. After three months he was handed over to the N. D. V. D. All attempts by his wife to ascertain his subsequent fate were unsuccessful. A year and a half after his arrest an N. K. V. D. agent appeared with a letter from her husband. He would not give her the letter but read it aloud instead. She maintained that the letter really looked as though written and signed by her husband. In it he begged her to send him a little fat and some warm clothing. The letter was taken back; his wife, however, was reassured by the agent who had told her that her husband's conduct was good and that he would be released within a month. The poor woman collected everything she had to make up a package /62/ to send the prisoner a little fat and some dried crusts. They took the package, and the woman sat up every night until morning waiting for her husband's return since there were rumors that prisoners were released from prison only after midnight. Eventually on one of these nights they came and carried off the woman herself, confiscating all her property and placing the apartment at the disposal of the N. K. V. D. Two homeless children remained, one twelve years old and the other four or five.

564 661 The family of a prisoner was in a difficult and terrifying position. Often they had no means of subsistance, and in matters of earning a living they were considered enemies of the people. Members of such a family were not accepted for work, and those who already had jobs were dismissed on some pretext if not simply driven out into the street. The children of a prisoner suffered real tragedy as their situation was quite hopeless. They were refused admittance into middle and upper schools, and in the general schools they were expelled from all student organizations. The family of an "enemy of the people" was beyond the pale of the already limited Soviet legality. Neighbors and acquaintances kept away in such cases and refused to organize the members of the family. Everyone knew full well that there was no helping another's grief, and it was possible to draw suspicion upon oneself by having dealings with an enemy of the people. Such hard-hearted behavior should not be attributed to indignation and enmity toward the fate of relatives of an arrested man, but rather to an attempt to remain apart from it all or to escape the fate of the unlucky ones.

661 All the Belorussian commissars, their deputies, and many of the directors of trusts and other institutions were arrested. Others were appointed in their places and they themselves were frequently arrested in a very short time.

As an example the changes in the People's Commissariat of Public Education can be cited. After Platun's recall from the commissariat, D. Chernushevich was appointed in his place. Before being arrested he was dismissed from his job on charges of National-Democracy. He remained at liberty for two months and made efforts to get out of Belorussia to Rostov on the Don. This attempt failed. He was arrested after another month, and after a short while his wife suffered the same fate.

For a few months the Central-Committee functionary, D'iakov, an uncultured and half-educated person, was Commissar of Public Education. He was also arrested and Voronchenko appointed in his place. An engineer by specialty, young, energetic, and a Communist since Komsomol days he did not last long either but was quickly arrested. /63/ Uralova was the first one to stay at the job, being Narkompros during the war and still in that position not long ago. According to newspaper reports Uralova has now

(i.e. one arrested for political deviation - Analyst)

661 been appointed Deputy President of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R.

563 I consider it necessary to remark on the absurdity of some statements to the effect that the N. K. V. D. discriminated in favor of the Jews in making its arrests. Such statements are untrue and tainted with anti-Semitism. If the interested party were concerned with establishing the truth, he could find out from documents that all People's Commissars of the B. S. S. R., regardless of how proletarian their extraction, were arrested. The Commissar of the Communal Economy of the B. S. S. R., Waserman, can serve as an example. During the Ezhovshchina he was arrested together with some others, and in prison went out of his mind. His wife was also arrested. The only one to escape arrest was the Deputy Commissar of the Food Industry, Evsei Paksin, and this was just an accident. The high ranking Jewish Party leaders did not escape either.

625 What went on in the rayons was unspeakably horrible. The
661 most primitive accomodations for thousands of people were hastily
[697] knocked together. In the city of Rogachevo prisoners were confined in the wintertime in a ruined old castle without stoves, doors or windows. The ruins were surrounded with barbed wire and by a guard. People died; an epidemic of typhus broke out, and the N. K. V. D. had to stop using the prison.

The inhabitants of the rayons adjacent to Poland were in excessively difficult straits as the N. K. V. D. border guard held sway there. Whole villages were emptied of their population. Everyone about whose reliability there was the slightest suspicion or who might have been suspected of being dissatisfied with the Soviet regime, was arrested. It can be stated without exaggeration that a good half of the male population suffered from the persecution. A 'troika's' had jurisdiction over the arrested, and the sentence was final and not subject to appeal. At night the condemned were carted away in trucks to be shot somewhere in the woods. /64/

As to the number of victims of the 1936-1937 terror we can judge by the following indices. Before the war Minsk had a population of about 250,000, and at the height of the Ezhovshchina from four to five hundred were arrested in a night. At twelve o'clock when the "normal work" of the N. K. V. D. usually began, fear seized the city's population. People could not sleep but waited nervously for the knock and the rustling. There was panic

2 Dur[illegible] for political purposes 1936-1937 [illegible]

625 661 in the apartments at the sound of an automobile in the street. Every family expected the dreaded visitors. Often in one family several persons were arrested. Fellow-workers in the various institutions, coming to work in the morning, looked around uneasily to determine the number of victims of the previous night. A person had to make superhuman efforts to maintain his outward calm and self-control at his work. He had to appear indifferent to the arrests of his close friends or people sharing his views. It was dangerous to show any interest in the prisoners or to ask about the fate of their families. The nerves of some who were still at liberty could not stand the strain. They did not lie down and go to sleep but got dressed and wandered aimlessly through the deserted streets of the city until morning. There was nothing to justify this behavior, but in the street one somehow felt more composed, and it was better than to wait for death in your own apartment. A person comforted himself with the fact that he would usually learn somewhat earlier if any fatal blow was being prepared for him. Many tried to be sent to distant, and if possible isolated, places. Anyone who could, tried to go to another oblast', another kray, far from any settled regions. There were cases of voluntary requests to be transferred to work in the Arctic Circle, Yakutiya, or the polar regions, of persons who signed contracts to work there -- in the hope of being saved from arrest. However these measures seldom were of any avail. Foresighted people would prepare a small parcel with laundry and some necessary articles in case they were to be arrested. The terror was heightened by rumors of the nightmarish conditions under which the prisoners were kept, tortures during the examinations forced confessions. The prison cells were filled to overflowing; prisoners slept in shifts, all lying on one side so as to take up less room that way, and after a certain time, at a command, all turning over to lie on the other side.

697 661 Before being deposited in the cell, prisoners[1] were subjected to the most minute search; all watches, glasses, aids, bandages which sick people might have, and shoe laces were taken away; buttons were cut off trousers, jackets, overcoats, and buckles were taken off shoes. Particular care was taken to make sure that the prisoners did not keep anything metallic. Being deprived of glasses and bandages was, for those who were sick, a cause not only of discomfort /65/ but of pain. The former provincial and district prisons were altered during the Ezhovshchina.

[1] [Political prisoners of the 1936-1937 purge - Ann Sager]

697 Windows were reduced in size by the three quarters and filled with
661 bricks, wooden shields being set in some, to make it impossible to see the jail yard or the side of the street or to see the outside world in general. In the yards of the prison special cages were constructed for the prisoners' walks, surrounded by a high board fence without a roof, into which they let prisoners. Special small cells were made, completely without windows, and the number of rooms of confinement of all kinds was increased. The prison shops were made over into cells for holding prisoners. The prisons were transformed into places for keeping people who were under investigation. Those convicted were sent to distant concentration camps. Rooms were kept strictly isolated one from another, but nonetheless news was not only quickly disseminated throughout the prison but even penetrated beyond the walls.

661 When the terror slackened a very insignificant part of the prisoners was set free. However, almost every one of them had been ruined in health: teeth had been knocked out, ribs broken, ear drums shattered, rectums injured from being forced to sit on the sharp point of a stool or chair leg. But the principal sickness was spiritual emptiness, and for many, bitter disillusionment, dejection, apathy. Those liberated who were not Party members returned to their former places of work, if they had not already been replaced by others. For this "forced" absence they were not reimbursed, even though Soviet labor law makes provisions for the individual's wages to be paid him by his employer if through no fault of his own he is unable to work. Many had been forced to sign an attestation that they would not divulge what they had seen and heard in the N. K. V. D., and this paralyzed any demand that their legal rights be protected which had
665 been mercilessly violated. Unenviable also was the lot of Party
661 members who were set at liberty.[1] They had to go through even more trouble to be reinstated in the Party. The very fact of arrest made the Party member an expellee. No doubt many of them would have been glad to remain outside the Party, but a person who had been expelled and made no effort at reinstatement was automatically put in an incomparably worse situation than that of any non-Party person. Leaders adopted a rather guarded attitude toward those who had been liberated from arrest. They were a source of fear and danger in the event of one of the possible twists of the Communist Party's unforeseeable and changeable policy.

[1] [After having been arrested during the 1936-1937 political purge - Analyst]

7: Krushinsky - 74 - G-4, 5 (no date) 1953 RC1 Belorussia RC1

Ezhovshchina -- Summary /66/

661 The Ezhovshchina did away with nearly all the senior mem-
665 bers of the Communist Party, and of all those with pre-October standing there remained, apparently, only a few isolated individuals. All those who had been partisans in the Soviet-Polish War were annihilated; before the Ezhovshchina they had been considered a bulwark of all Communist measures in the outlying districts, especially in the ones on the Polish-Soviet border, and not a single political campaign could be promulgated without their active participation. Nor did those Communists escape who in their time had been sent to do underground work in Western Belorussia; they were accused of being Polish spies. Those who had been taken prisoner by the Germans during the first World War were also included, as they had seen the outside, even though their memories of it were far from pleasant since most of them had lived through a famine there. All Party members without exception who had, to any degree and no matter how remotely, been contaminated with Trotskyism or some other kind of opposition, were arrested.

661 The remnants of the Belorussian intelligentsia were arrested. This now included people who had not participated actively in anything but who, by their outward characteristics, could have been supposed capable of independent thought: teachers, agronomists, engineers, planners and others. Almost none of the Belorussian poets and writers escaped. All who had served terms of imprisonment after being arrested in 1930 were arrested a second time during the Ezhovshchina and underwent a more severe form of punishment. In addition to the fact that the same Belorussian national workers who in 1930 had been condemned for National-Democracy were this time accused of Fascism, they also received a sentence of more years in concentration camps or were shot. A part of those arrested and condemned in 1930 was brought to the N. K. V. D. in Minsk. By means of examinations and visual confrontations they were used as witnesses for the indictments of those more recently arrested, and they, through the testimonies of these same newly arrested prisoners they themselves either had their sentences increased or were executed. Some prominent Belorussian figures who escaped were the satiricist, Kondrat Krapiva, and the former president of the Union of Belorussian writers, the Communist M. Klinkovich who out of fear of arrest cut

661 his throat with a razor but was saved from dying. Possibly it was just this which saved him from arrest. Others who were not arrested were Z. Biadulia and the budding writers, Brovko and Glebko. /67/

After the Ezhovshchina

625 661 After the Ezhovshchina accounts were settled with those whose function it had been to execute the will of the organizers of the terror. However, this took place within the walls of the N. D. V. D. In Vitebsk a certain Grechkin who had been arrested and subsequently set free was summoned to the (N. K. V. D.) court to serve as a witness in a case involving the inadmissibility of torture during examination. The investigator had knocked out several of Grechkin's teeth and was found guilty, but Grechkin was compelled to sign a statement that he would not divulge any information about what had transpired. The document, I Accuse the Kremlin of the Genocide of My Nation, by Nikolai Abramchik, published in 1950 in Toronto, Canada, in English, will provide sufficient testimony to the deeds of the N. K. V. D. in Belorussia during the Ezhovshchina.

625 661 The secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, Volkov, was recalled from Belorussia after the Ezhovshchina and sent off to work in Mordovskaia oblast'. What became of him subsequently is not known, but the Belorussians will not forget this black figure who himself played such a very vital part in the slaughter ot tens of thousands of people. His cruelty was exceptional. P. Ponomarenko, who formerly had been a political agent in the Red Army in the Far East, was appointed first secretary. A new direction could be sensed in the Party's work, and this was particularly noticeable where the national movement was concerned. Formerly, national characteristics had been taken into account in various elections, appointments, and recruitments, but after the arrival of Ponomarenko the national problem ceased to exist officially. The whole group of the former leaders had been destroyed.[1] 661 643 Natalevich -- a man little known to the Belorussian masses, lacking in authority and initiative, and obedient to the will of the secretary of the Central Committee -- settled down into the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. To the post of Secretary of the Supreme Soviet -- who in fact was the deputy president -- a completely unknown worker from around Mogilev 661 was appointed. A young doctor named Kiselev, who was totally

[1] [During the 1936-1937 political purge - Analyst]

7: Krushinsky '76 - G-4, 5 (no date) 1953 RC1 Belorussia RC1

A young doctor named Kiselev, who was totally
661 unacquainted with the agricultural situation in Belorussian and
645 its people, was made President of the Sovnarkom.* Before the war, Kiselev was recalled to Moscow and appointed third deputy of the People's Commissariat of Public Health of the R. S. F. S. R.

After the Ezhovshchina all the higher echelons, including
661 the Supreme Soviet, the Sovnarkom, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Academy of Sciences, and others took measures to efface from the national memory those figures who had become victims of the terror. Whenever it was necessary to apply some legislative act the correctness of which was not open to question, the signatures of anyone already dead or in a concentration camp were carefully concealed. Every allusion to the decoration of individual figures or institutions, such as the theaters, was destroyed /38/ as having been the work of enemies of the people. Under Ponomarenko the long established Belorussian tradition of appointing a Belorussian as second secretary of the Party was stopped. On Ponomarenko's request Moscow sent its own men out to Belorussia as commissars, directors of Central Committee subdivisions, and secretaries. Not following the example of former Party secretaries, Ponomarenko did not try to make himself popular by attending political meetings or other kinds of gatherings. Organizational work was handled by the other Party secretaries and directors of subdivisions. Ponomarenko loved displaying himself as a patron of the arts. He devoted a lot of attention to organizing various types of 'dekada', even in Moscow. He could be seen at theater premieres and at the Belorussian opera. He was also a sports enthusiast and visited the football matches at the stadiums.

Western Belorussia and Wilno in Soviet Hands

661 In 1939 the Red Army forcibly united Soviet Belorussia with
177 its western portion.

A territory including a hundred new rayons was added. It had completely different attitudes toward the forms of state life, and, as might have been expected, a tremendous propaganda campaign on the ideal value of the form and content of Soviet power was initiated in the new rayons with all institutions being reorganized on the Soviet model. Soviet Belorussia alone, however, could not quite cope with this new territory, and workers were sent out from the central oblast's of the R. S. F. S. R.. Their selection was not invariably successful --

*[After the 1936-1937 political purge - Analyst]

177 everything grew more and more disorganized just when the situation
661 demanded the strictest order. I must admit that the Belorussian grass-roots population in general, and also the working intelligentsia, did not fear the arrival of the Soviets. Many, especially the poorest of the peasantry, expected free land--while the workers looked forward to the elimination of unemployment. The intelligentsia placed its hopes upon being allowed to acquire learning in its native language without being forced to become Polish or Catholic and upon seeing the Belorussian youth freely admitted into high schools and universities. In truth there was much in the first days after the arrival of the Soviet power that was hard for the Belorussians to understand. For instance, the mass purchase by the Soviets of all food products, shoes, manufactured articles and all the other things which the stores had in abundance--while at the same time the population heard every day, at meetings and on the radio, about the happy and plentiful life in the Soviet Union. Food for thought was also provided by the impoverished appearence of the Soviet employees, even the higher ones, who were coming to western Belorussia to work or on missions. Nor was it easy to understand why the former boundary, together with special passes, /69/ was preserved, and why the local population could not get permission to visit relatives on the other side. The newly created Soviet institutions worked far from smoothly. The population was also badly surprised when an unexpected decree annulled all former Polish money with hardly any exchange for Soviet money and when hard-earned savings as well as other kinds of money was confiscated in banks and savings institutions. This measure put all pensionaries and the whole working population in a very difficult position. There were some instances of landlords and other wealthy persons being murdered as a result of the incitement by propagandists. Those guilty of such killings were never brought to justice for the simple reason that Ponomarenko himself, in a constructive speech to those responsible workers who were just arriving, let it be understood that it was not worth their trouble to attach any importance to such blood vengeance since they testified to the "national anger" of the masses.

Simultaneously there were uncéasing arrests throughout all of western Belorussia. The prisons were overflowing with Polish officials and government employees, with peasants who in some function or another had been attached to Polish institutions, with volost' foremen /starshina/, village elders, and policemen. Old Russian emigrants

were also arrested, as well as Belorussian soldiers from the Polish Army who had escaped German imprisonment, any of the masses of those who were caught attempting to get into the central zone of Poland which was still under German occupation, members of the local clergy and any well-to-do elements. All who were under severe suspicion were dispatched to the N. K. V. D. in Minsk, and the rest--to concentration camps in Siberia. The conditions of imprisonment were repellent, and the methods employed during examinations were worse even than those of the despised Polished Defensiva. Belorussians openly admitted to the examiners that the Poles had been Polonizing them for twenty years without success, but that with the arrival of the Soviets, Polonization had been accomplished within a few months. This was the general tenor. In addition to the general arrests there were also individual ones, meaning that various segments of the population were liquidated. The first victims were the so-called Polish settlers, that is, the Polish colonizers who were the bulwark of the Polish state in western Belorussia. They were former members of the Polish army who had been allotted private homesteads with twenty to fifty hectares of land on preferential terms as well as being granted preferential /agricultural/ credits. The Orthodox Belorussian population was not even granted the right to buy land from these landlords. However, together with their families they were now shipped off to the east. One winter night all the employees of the forest service were sent off in the same direction /70/ starting with the forest wardens, who had been partly appointed by the Soviets themselves, and extending even to professors of forestry. It was supposed that there were a lot of Polish Army weapons hidden in the woods and that the forest service knew about them; this was the reason for their deportation to Siberia. The families of Polish Army soldiers were likewise arrested and deported. 661 177

A few words about the transfer of the city of Wilno to the still semi-independent Lithuania. This transfer was accomplished at the end of 1939. Wilno is a rich trading city which was forcibly seized by the Polish general, Zhelikhovskii, and then included within the Polish state. When the Red Army occupied Wilno, the general opinion was that it would be included in Soviet Belorussia. However, the plan for seizing the Baltic area had already matured, and negotiations concerning an agreement to quarter Red Army soldiers on Baltic territory were imminent. In order that the Lithuanians should have a good opinion concerning the Soviet intentions toward them it was 000

000 decided to give Wilno to Lithuania, knowing that in this way it would become Soviet.

However, before deserting Wilno even temporarily, the military high command of the Red Army picked a special purchasing commission which bought up manufactured articles with captured Polish money. They also bought hides and leather goods, various types of machinery, etc. All the purchases were taken out of Wilno and exported into the center of the Soviet Union. The bigger merchants concealed most of their wares, but their stores were discovered with the aid of their servants (shop assistants). After the termination of the officially-appointed period for the transfer of Wilno to Lithuania the city remained in the hands of the N.K.V.D. for two more days. The latter liquidated all the "unneeded" elements in the city and the prisons.

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The Communist guidance of the life of the Belorussian people during P. Ponomarenko's term in office, can be characterized as a period of comparative quiet. No one particularly admired his methods or his personality, but there were no disturbing occurrences similar to those which marked the secretaryships of Gikalo and Volkov. The unification of western Belorussia distracted people's attention to a great extent from the various unnecessary experiments and tensions on the old territory of Soviet Belorussia. Everyone who had the chance, particularly the working intelligentsia, writers, poets, theatrical employees, singers, and musicians, used all their pull to get assigned to the newly-attached territory. Most of them wanted to get acquainted with the new capitalist world and see there the horrible suffering and generally pitiable existence of the peasantry and workers. Instead of it they saw, if not an absolutely high standard of living, at least /71/ the possibility of acquiring both food products and other articles for everyday use. These circumstances dispersed the legend of the oppressiveness of capitalism. In accordance with his means everyone tried to get clothes and shoes for himself, and in particular to buy something for his wife and children. Every conceivable employee in Moscow, from the All-Union Commissariats and various trusts right up to deputy commissars tried to get into Western Belorussia. The directors of Belorussian agricultural trusts acquired light cars with small cylinder displacement and often brought them back even to the All-Union Commissars, for a price, of course, but a comparatively low one. This type of light car appeared not

only in Minsk but even in Moscow, and they also got to Moscow by way of western Ukraine. They were considered very useful since they did not consume a lot of scarce gasoline. 177 557

As a matter of fact Soviet people could not understand the national antagonisms existing in former Poland. In Soviet Belorussia marriages between Belorussians and Jews were a common occurrence, but there, in western Belorussia, it was considered almost impossible and in any case an occurrence quite out of the ordinary. Some Soviet people were also surprised by the extreme subservience of the local population, particularly the peasantry, before government representatives and city people in general. This was the result of the training given by the Polish regime. Nonetheless a very short period of Soviet rule was sufficient to disappoint the population[1]- the new government caused all wares to disappear in the stores; there were queues for every possible trifle; Soviet currency was almost valueless; all acts committed by local people in the past, even of the most innocent nature, were ferreted out and brought to light if they had any relation with the Soviet government which had not existed on that territory at the time. A broad net of N. K. V. D. informers was spread out everywhere; all peace and quiet was shattered by arrests and the frequent occurrence of unexpected and senseless searches. Universal fear and suspicion soon became entrenched on the occupied territory. The local population, particularly the prosperous upper level and the intelligentsia, was very scornful in its relations with Soviet people, no matter who they were, although this feeling was hidden. 562 661 661

At this point it would be possible to terminate our description of Soviet reality on the eve of the Second World War. Only a few words more need to be said concerning the activity of the N. K. V. D. in this comparatively quiet period. It did not stop its arrests. People were always being snatched away, some because of the testimonies of prisoners arrested during the Exhovshchina, others for listening to foreign radio broadcasts. There was a purge among the workers and employees who had been brought to Minsk from Wilno together with a dismantled radio factory. /72/ Those in whose dossiers there was the slightest, most absurd, evidence from the agents were given particularly careful checkups as well as those who had already served some sentence in a concentration camp. 625 661

1 [in western Belorussia, annexed to Soviet Belorussia in 1939. Cf cat. 116, pp. 76-79 -- Analyst]

Evaluation of the Belorussian National Movement

186 So as to bring to a close our observations, which cover many years, we will try to provide an answer to the question whether the national movement in Belorussia was really a positive factor, whether it was of any genuine use to the Belorussian nation, and whether it justified the collossal number of bloody sacrifices which were offered up on the altar of nationalism. In our modest opinion the Belorussian national movement was unconditionally a positive factor in the history of the Belorussian nation, imparting a powerful impetus to the elevation of the national consciousness of the masses, to their cultural regeneration, and to the unprecedented development of national literary creativity, close to and understood by the national masses. As a result of the national advancement, which often lapsed into enthusiasm, the most talented and able figures came forward in all fields of the cultural and economic life of the region. Thanks to these self-sacrificing efforts a high level of research was maintained; there were unquestionable successes in the study of the historic past of the Belorussian nation; a firm foundation was laid for cognizance and study of the natural resources of the region and their eventual exploitation. Of invaluable service to the nation was the circumstance that the old generation of Belorussians was able to inculcate the young students who were their disciples with a love for the work of regenerating the Belorussian nation and to arouse their enthusiasm and unwavering faith in a happy future. The two generations united in a solid front and set to work to accomplish the tasks lying before them. It was fruitful and successful for the simple reason that the struggle did not involve the realization of some kind of abstract idea, as often as not difficult to understand and diffuse, nor was it directed against any particular class nor for any particular class but for the nation as a whole. The goal was clear and the road straight. The young generation was educated to follow the example of the Belorussian leaders, and the time will yet come when it will serve as the foundation for a further advance.

181 The national movement had still another positive aspect. It broke down the perverted concepts which the other peoples of Russia held about the Belorussians, their culture, way of life, manners, and customs; also it clarified the possibilities for an economic development in Belorussia. As far back as tsarist times there had been isolated

attempts to begin a study of the region. /73/ In addition to these /81/ well-intentioned efforts there were also superficial, frequently unobjective, studies which put the country on a false track, creating a mistaken impression about Belorussia. The materials on Belorussia were of a peculiar nature, failing to take its historic past into consideration and failing to make sufficient allowance for the tragic consequences of the continual craving of the East and West to master the territory of Belorussia and to denationalize its people. Consequently even such reliable sources of information as the Encyclopedia of Ephron and Brockhaus included some completely biased information about Belorussia and its people. Even Belorussian writers themselves, sincere patriots though they may have been, in some instances distorted the Belorussian reality in their works during the period of creative activity before the 1917 revolution. They resorted to unnecessary exaggeration in portraying the downtrodden state and oppression of the Belorussian peasantry and the severity and impoverished condition of the land. They consciously underemphasized all aspects of this world which were alive and vigorous. Nor were the pre-revolutionary school textbooks objective, especially as concerns geography, since they customarily portrayed the Belorussians as a nation sickly and uneducated, backward and with a primitive mode of life and the Belorussian geography as nothing but a swamp. Through this an erroneous impression was created. The literary, operatic, and theatrical productions, as well as the historical studies in agriculture, which appeared during the flowering of the national movement were certainly not inferior to and in some cases better than those produced by the other nationalities of the Soviet Union. More than that, these scholarly works, literary productions, and periodicals found their way into libraries and university archives in the United States and other western countries where they became the objects of study. They were of great assistance in distinguishing between Belorussia and the series of other guberniyas and oblast's of the Soviet Union. Thus by chance we became aware that in the main library of the city of Columbus a large number of volumes of the scholarly works (in Belorussian) of the Gorets Agricultural Academy are being preserved, together with those of the University of Belorussia and the Academy of Sciences. Even though these works were burned by the N.K.V.D. generally, and particularly when their authors were arrested, still there is the

181 certainty that they have been preserved here in the free world and sooner or later will come into the possession of the Belorussian nation. The time is at hand when the western world will become better acquainted with this remote and almost unknown country.

180 The national movement in Soviet Belorussia exerted a positive influence outside its borders also, upon western Belorussia. The heroic activity and determination of Belorussian patriots strengthened the perseverence of the conscious part of the Belorussian population of Poland, preventing it from yielding to enforced colonization and helping it to preserve its national ties and to use every available means to oppose the advances of Polish chauvinists in their attempts to denationalize the Belorussians. In spite of the closing of all Belorussian national schools in western Belorussia, the intelligentsia studied and learned Belorussian literature, preserved its language, and remained devoted to the nation.

Leading figures of the Belorussian national movement were destroyed, together with their pupils and followers. The Belorussian nation suffered a fearful loss and was left without its standard-bearers; the youth was almost totally deprived of its preceptors; the national values which had been created at such effort and expense were crushed out of existence. The ideals of the Belorussian nation had to be hidden deep underground. But did everything perish?--No! Sprouts have been prepared for a stormy growth and development, and those who have gone before will remain as shining examples for an oppressed Belorussia. And the rebirth to come will be the most valuable remembrance and the richest monument to those Belorussians who gave up their lives for the good of the nation.

Appendix I /75/

A list of Belorussians arrested and deported in 1930-1931 for implication in the National-Democratic movement

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1. Adamovich, Aleksandr (Ales')	Commissar of Agriculture Prishchepov's Deputy; deported to Solovki in 1931.
2. Azbukin, Nikolai	A professor at the University of Belorussia; deported in 1931 to Nolinsk, (formerly) Vyatskaya guberniya.
3. Anikhovskii, Aleksandr	Deported in 1931 to Slobodskoy, (formerly) Vyatskaya guberniya, and subsequently transferred to a concentration camp.
4. Apatsenak, Fedor	Deported to the north in 1931.
5. Afanas'ev.	A professor; arrested in 1930.
6. Babareko, Adam	Assistant professor and critic; arrested in 1930; deported in 1931; died in prison in 1937.
7. Balitskii, Anton	Commissar of Public Education of the B. S. S. R.; arrested in 1930; deported to Solovki in 1931.
8. Vashchina, Konstantin (Lukash Kaliucha)	Writer; deported in 1931 to Irbit; transferred in 1936 to a concentration camp and shot.
9. Boikov, Nikolai	Assistant Professor of Philology; arrested in 1930.
10. Boiko, Ivan	Agronomist; arrested in 1930; shot in 1933.
11. Burdzeika	Agronomist; deported to the north in 1931.
12. Bel'kevich, Ivan	Philologist; deported in 1931. /76/
13. Golovinskii, Aleksandr	Engineer; deported in 1931.
14. Goretskii, Maksim	Writer, critic, literary historian; arrested in 1930 and deported to Vyatka (afterwards named Kirov); arrested again in 1937; disappeared

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		in the torture chamber of the Ezhovshchina.
15.	Goretskii, Gabriil	Academician; deported in 1931; arrested again in 1936; disappeared in the torture chambers of the Ezhovshchina.
16.	Gromyko, Mikhail	Poet and geologist; deported in 1931 to Ivanovo-Voznesensk.
17.	Gurskii, Mikhail	Artist; deported in 1931 to Malmyzh, (formerly) Vyatskya guberniya.
18.	Dovgialo	Professor and archeologist; deported in 1931.
19.	Druzhchits, Vasilii	Historian; deported to the north in 1931.
20.	Dubinskii, Sergei	Archeologist; arrested in 1930; arrested again in 1937; disappeared in the torture chambers of the Ezhovshchina.
21.	Dubovka, Vladimir	Poet; deported in 1931; arrested again in 1937; disappeared in the torture chambers of the Exhovshchina.
22.	Dudar, Aleksandr	Arrested in 1929 and again in 1937; died.
23.	Dyla, IAzep	Historian; arrested in 1930 and 1931; deported to the north.
24.	Zharskii, Platon	Philologist; arrested in 1930.
25.	Zhilka, Vladimir	Poet; arrested in 1931; died in exile in Urshum, (formerly) Vyatskaya guberniya; in 1933.
26.	Zabela	Assistant Professor of History, arrested in 1930; deported to the north; died /77/
27.	Ignatovskii, Vsevolod	Professor and President of the Academy of Sciences; shot himself in 1931.
28.	Il'iuchenok	Deported in 1931 to Solovki.
29.	Kondrat'ev	Arrested in 1930.
30.	Karavaichik, Pavel (Liubetskii)	Literary critic and medical doctor; arrested in 1930; deported in 1931.
31.	Korenevskii, IAzep	Rector of the University, arrested in the thirties.
32.	Kasperovich, Nikolai	Ethnologist; arrested in 1930; deported to the north in 1931.

33. Katerinich — Teacher; deported in 1931.
34. Kirkevich, M. — Agronomist; arrested in 1930; died in exile in the north.
35. Kokhanovich, M. — Arrested in 1930; deported.
36. Krasinskii, Nikolai — Professor of Philology; arrested in 1930; deported in 1931 to Poshekhonsk in the north.
37. Kraskovskii, Ivan — Professor and historian; deported in 1931.
38. Krinitsa, Anton (Anton Zhdanovich) — Artist; deported.
39. Kuptsevich, Feliks — Critic; arrested in 1930; arrested again in 1933 and deported to Minusinsk in Siberia.
40. Lastovskii, Vatslav — Academician; arrested in 1930; deported to Saratov in 1931; imprisoned again in 1937; disappeared in the torture chambers of the Ezhovshchina.
41. Lesik, IAzep — Philologist; arrested in 1930; deported in 1931; died in prison in 1936. /78/
42. Listopad, IUrii — Teacher; found guilty in 1926; arrested again in the thirties and deported.
43. Liazhnevich, Aleksandr — Playwright; deported to the north in 1931.
44. Mamchits, Nikolai — Teacher, Narkompros inspector, assistant professor; deported to the north in 1931.
45. Maruk, Ivan — Public figure; deported in 1931.
46. Mitskevich, Adam — Assistant Professor of Physics; deported in 1931 to Vyatskiy kray (to the town of Malmyzh).
47. Meleshka, Sergei — Assitant Professor of History; deported to the north in 1931.
48. Mukha, Ivan — Teacher and assistant professor; deported to the north in the thirties.
49. Nekrashevich, Stepan — Vice-President of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences; deported to the north in 1931.

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50.	Rodzevich, Cheslav	Engineer; deported to the north in 1931.
51.	Savich	Deported in the thirties for being a National-Democrat.
52.	Sereda, Ivan	Professor and veterinarian; deported to Yaroslavl' in 1931.
53.	Skandrakov	Professor of Agronomy; deported to the north in 1931.
54.	Smolich, Arkadii	Professor and academician; arrested in 1930 and deported to the north in 1931.
55.	Sushinskii	Assistant Professor of Chemistry; deported to Astrakhan' in 1931.
56.	Trampovich, Pavel	Doctor; deported to the north in 1931. /79/
57.	Ulashchik, Nikolai	A young historian, he was as a National-Democrat deported in 1931 to Nolinsk and from there transferred to a concentration camp.
58.	Ulitsyn	Assistant professor; arrested and shot in the thirties.
59.	Funk, Aleksandr (pseudonym A. Garodnia)	Critic; arrested in 1930; deported in 1931.
60.	Kharlampovich	Professor of Archeology; deported to the north in 1931.
61.	Tsvikevich, Aleksandr	Political figure; arrested in 1930; deported to the Urals /Ural'e/ in 1931; arrested again in 1937; disappeared in the torture chambers of the Ezhovshchina.
62.	Charzhinskii (Derzhinskii), Vladislav	Critic; deported to Kazan' in 1931.
63.	Chernushevich, Nikifor	Assistant Professor of Chemistry and poet; deported to Vyatka in 1931.
64.	Shashalevich, Vasilii	Playwright; arrested in 1930 and again in 1936; deported to Kolyma.
65.	Shchekotikhin, Nikolai	Professor of Art; deported to Vyatskiy Kray in 1931..
66.	Shliubskii, Ol'gerd	Archeologist; deported to the north in 1931.
67.	[Aroshchuk, Nikolai	Agronomist; deported to Astrakhan' in 1931.

This list includes by no means all of those who where punished, in fact scarcely more than one fifth of all those implicated. 661

/80/ Appendix II

A list of those arrested in 1933 and later, for furthering the national work in Belorussia

1.	Astapenka, Dimitrii	A poet: arrested in 1933; deported; arrested and deported again in 1936.
2.	Boiko, IAnka (Ivan)	Assistant Professor of Agronomy; arrested a second time in 1933.
3.	Vecher, Aleksandr	A poet; arrested in 1933; there are no traces of what became of him.
4.	Gavruk, IUrka (IUrii)	A poet: fiction writer, and translator; arrested in 1933; no traces.
5.	Nikonovich, Nikolai	Writer; deported to the Urals in 1933.
6.	Pribytkovskii, Vladimir	Poet; arrested in 1933; no traces.
7.	Rogacheskii, Petr	Author; deported to Siberia in 1933.
8.	Rodzevich, Leonard	Writer and public figure; arrested in the thirties; no traces.
9.	Sologub, Aleksandr	Poet; arrested in 1933 and shot.
10.	Taubin, IUlii	Poet; arrested in 1933; deported for the second time in 1936.
11.	Khotylev, Petr	Writer and critic; arrested in 1936 and deported.
12.	Chernushevich, Nikolai (pseudonum: M. Khvebarovich)	Poet; deported in 1937.
13.	Shalai, Makar	Critic; went out of his mind in prison during the Ezhovshchina.
14.	Shashaevich, Andrei (pseudonum: Myrí Andrei)	Satirical writer and also prominent in the regional studies movement; arrested in 1933; no traces.

/81/ Belorussians who came from Poland

1.	Baran, S.	Ambassador of the Polish Sejm; condemned by a Polish court and

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		deported to the B. S. S. R. where he was arrested in 1933; without a trace.
2.	Bursevich, Mikhail	Ambassador of the Polish Sejm; arrested in 1933 and sent to Solovki.
3.	Volozhin, P.	Ambassador of the Polish Sejm; deported to Solovki.
4.	Volynets, Flegont	Ambassador of the Polish Sejm; deported to Solovki.
5.	Gavrilik, Iosif	Ambassador of the Polish Sejm; deported to Solovki.
6.	Dvorchanin, Ignat	Doctor of Philology; same fate as the others.
7.	Metla, Petr	Condemned by a Polish court to thirteen years in the B. S. S. R.; arrested in 1933 and deported to Solovki where he died.
8.	Rak-Mikhailovskii	Condemned by a Polish court to thirteen years; arrested in 1933 and deported to Solovki.
9.	Tarashkevich, Bronislav	Professor of Philology; while in Poland sentenced to thirteen years; deported to Moscow; arrested in 1936; no traces.